

TWENTY-THREE
Select S E R M O N S,

Preached at the
MERCHANTS-LECTURE,
A T
Pinner's-Hall, and in Lime-street.

Wherein Several
Cases of Conscience,
A N D
Other Weighty Matters, are
propounded, and handled.

By the Judicious and Learned *K*
Mr. NATHANAEL MATHER.

—Who being dead, yet speaketh, Heb. ii. 4.

L O N D O N :
Printed for N. Hiller, at the Princes Arms in Leaden-
hall-street, over-against St. Mary-Axe. 1701.

Abigail Moore

Aciron X moore



THE BOOKSELLER TO THE READER.

IT is not the Design of this short Preface, to Court any into the Buying and Reading this Book : 'Tis hoped, the main Subject of it, Self-Examination, being so necessary, and being so inoffensively handled, will invite every serious Person, (who makes Religion, and his own Salvation his main Business) to peruse and deeply consider it : And 'tis presumed, that most Readers of such Books as this, do already know, or have heard of the Ability and Worth of the Reverend Author, whose Praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches.

I shall only acquaint you how these Sermons came to be Printed. They were taken in Short-hand from the Preacher's Mouth, by the Pen of a ready Writer ; and were afterwards transcribed fair, and some of 'em put into the Author's Hand for his Correction ; wherein he had made some Progress : For 'tis well known to some of his Friends, that he intended to have Printed them if he had lived.

When it pleased the Lord of the Harvest to give him Rest from his Labours, this Work cea-

The Bookseller to the Reader.

fed ; and the Transcriber had his Copy restored to him again, expecting then, and indeed desiring nothing farther, but to enjoy it in Private for his own Edification : Till some Friends to whom he had lent his Copy (whose Judgments he had good Reason to value), and others, who knew he had such a Treasure, frequently, and earnestly, desired him to let it be made Publick for the Common Good : Urging, that Volumes of Sermons, not more Correct than these, had been of great use to many serious and humble Christians : And that it was much better they should be Printed thus, without the Author's last Hand, than not at all : And that it could be no Reflection upon him in the least, who would indeed have Published 'em in a much better Dress, and somewhat enlarged, if he had lived to put 'em forth himself.

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And because there is a manifest Difference in Style, which ought to be observed between Speaking to a Popular Assembly, and Publishing to the World ; some Care has been taken to Revise the Copy, since 'twas determined it should be Printed : And where any Expression was more doubtful, diverse Copies were compared, and the Author's own Notes consulted. Whence 'tis hoped, no gross Defects will be found, even by an intelligent Reader : And for less Faults, they will surely be pardon'd in a Posthumous Work.

JY 61

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ERRATA.

SERMON I.

ROM. X. iii.

For they being ignorant of GOD's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

IN this and the foregoing and following Chapter, the Apostle is discoursing of that awful and tremendous Dispensation of God, in casting off the *Jews*. And in this Discourse of the Apostle thereon, you may observe these *Three* principal Hinges or *Heads*, To which the most of what he delivers may be referred.

1. He discovers the *Original Spring* of it : The *Eternal Purpose* and Pleasure of God. He had so determined within himself : Herein God exerciseth that high and uncontroulable *Sovereignty* of his, whereby he hath power over the Creatures, to *determine* concerning them, and *dispose* of them, as absolutely, as the Potter hath over the Clay.

2. Another great *Head* upon which the Apostle discourseth, is the *Way and Means* whereby God brought about this high and Sovereign Purpose of his. For tho' it was *purposed* in a way of *Sovereignty*, yet the *Execution* of it is in a way of *Justice* and Righteousness. It was there-

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fore

fore brought about by the Sin of the Jews: And the great Sin by which the Holy God brought about their Rejection was not such Sensuality, or such Violence, or such gross Profaneness and open contempt of God as were in the old World; which were the Sins then reigning, and which brought the Deluge: Nor was it Idolatry, which had brought them into the Captivity of Babylon, near to an utter casting off. But it was a Sin of a more Spiritual and refined nature; namely, *Lying out from CHRIST, and refusing Him, in the tenders of Him made unto them. They were broken off, saith the Apostle, because of Unbelief.* That is the second Head of his Discourse: Then

3. There is a Third, which you will find takes up a part of this Chapter, and all the next. And that is, *To clear and vindicate this deep and awful Dispensation, from those imputations which it was like to fall under in the thoughts of the Jews themselves, or in the thoughts of Others.*

The Objections against it are Two: And seem both of them to arise from that grand Maxim, *That all the Dispensations of God should tend to the Glory of his Name*; But this of casting off the Jews, seemeth to have no such Tendency, but rather to eclipse his Glory; And that upon a double account: First, Because it seems to infringe the faithfulness of God, with respect unto his Covenant with Abraham their first Father and Root. And Secondly, If that can be cleared; Yet it seems to narrow and lessen the Interest of God in the World, They being his only People, if They be cast off, what shall become of his Interest in the World? Will it not be greatly lessened, yea even utterly lost and extirpated?

You

You will find in the Apostles Discourse both these Objections answered.

1. As to the First, viz. *God's Covenant with Abraham*: The Apostle shows it was not absolute and peremptory, as to *saving Mercy*, to *all* his natural Seed: But it running indefinitely, it was to take place in a saving manner only upon the *Elect*. *All are not Israel who are of Israel*. Moreover the Apostle addeth, That even the *Natural* seed of *Abraham* were not all utterly cast off. No, God forbid, there was a *Remnant* even at that time. And farther, As to Gods Covenant with *Abraham*, Tho' it might seem in this Dispensation to be dead and buried, yet it had life as in the Root; And there should be a time when the Grace of it should break forth again; The *Jews* were to be *grafted in* again. These things you will find suggested in the Apostles Discourse: And they do tend to answer and satisfy that Objection, *That Gods casting off the Jews might seem to be an infringement of his faithfulness; and so darken the Glory of his Truth*.

2. As to the other Objection, *The lessening his Interest in the World*: There are sundry things in the Apostles Discourse which do clear *that*. It is true indeed, his Interest among the *Jews* would be much lessened, yea for the present quite lost; But yet his interest in the *World* would be enlarged: For the casting off of the *Jews* was to be accompanied with the calling and grafting in of the *Gentiles*: So that his interest in the *World* was not lessened by this Dispensation, but enlarged greatly. And tho' it was lessened for the present among the *Jews*, yet a time should come, when both *Jews* and *Gentiles* should have an interest in

God, and the knowledge of God be revived among them, and they should *both be brought into one fold*: For this calling of the *Jews* again, *should be the riches of the World and life from the dead*, even to the Gentiles. And in both these the faithfulness of God did appear: For both the Rejection of the *Jews*, and calling of the *Gentiles*, were but what was foretold in the Scriptures of old. And lastly, Tho' the Dispensation be awful and tremendous, yet it is *that* wherein doth shine forth the *depth of the riches both of the knowledge and wisdom of God*, and how *unsearchable his Judgments are*, and his ways *past finding out*; of whom and through whom and to whom are all things, and therefore *this* so deep and so astonishing a Dispensation. So the Apostle winds up and concludes his Discourse on this Subject.

The Words which I have read belong to the *second Head*; viz. *The Way and Means* by which this awful thing the *Casting off the Jews* was to be brought about. And the Text tells us of *three fatal Miscarriages of the Jews*.
 1. They were ignorant of Gods righteousness
 2. They went about to establish their own righteousness.
 3. They did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God.

In speaking to the *First* of These, there are two Things must be a little cleared.

1. *What is meant by this Righteousness of God*, which they are said to be ignorant of?

For answer to this, you may take notice that this phrase *God's righteousness*, or the righteousness of God, is by this Apostle used in a twofold Signification (1.) For that righteousness of his, which is *through faith unto all and upon all that believe*, *The righteousness which is by faith*: So you have it in the Third Chapter of this Epistle,

ver. 21. 22. That is the righteousness of *Christ* which is imputed unto Believers: and is called the righteousness of God here; and the righteousness which is of God, *Phil. 3. 9.* because *Christ* who wrought it out was God, and because it is a righteousness of *God's* contrivance, devising, and finding out for us, and of *his* gracious giving to us. (2.) The righteousness of God signifies that *Attribute* of God which we commonly call *Holiness* and *Justice*; which is that Perfection of his Nature whereby he hateth Sin, and cannot but hate it. So you find it used *Rom. 3. 25, 26.* Where the Apostle saith that God hath set forth *Christ* to be a Propitiation for Sin, to declare his Righteousness; I say to declare his Righteousness, that he might be just and the Justifier of him that believeth.

Now the Question is, In which of these senses *Righteousness* is to be taken in the first clause of this Text? There are many learned Interpreters that take it in the former sense, for the righteousness brought in by *Christ*: And I would not willingly depart from their apprehension, were there not some considerations which do in my judgment cast the Scale unto the other signification. And therefore by *Righteousness* in this first part of the Verse, I conceive is meant that *Attribute* and *Perfection* of God whereby he hateth Sin with an infinite hatred. For so the word is used elsewhere; and that sense suiteth well with this place, and indeed rather better than the other: For their Ignorance of this Righteousness of God was the spring and root of their going about to establish their own righteousness. And if you take God's righteousness in the beginning of the *ver.* in the same sense with

the righteousness of God in the *latter end* of the verse, then their *ignorance* of God's righteousness is muchwhat the same with, or at least falls under their *not submitting* themselves unto the righteousness of God: For their unacquaintedness with and *not receiving* the righteousness of Christ by faith, is plainly meant by *not submitting* themselves unto the righteousness of God. I take therefore their *ignorance of God's righteousness* in the first clause, to be their *ignorance of the glorious Purity of God's Nature*.

2. The second Thing to be opened is, *How can it be said They were ignorant of this Righteousness of God?* For the Apostle speaketh of the Jews; yea of those who had a zeal of God: For in the verse before the Text he beareth Record for them that *they had a Zeal of God*; yet here in the Text he saith they were *ignorant of the righteousness of God*. But the Answer is plain and obvious, *viz. That they had a Zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*. They had some general apprehensions that it did concern them to please God, and they were solicitous to commend themselves unto God, and had a desire of finding acceptance with him, and were careful to do things which they thought were pleasing unto God: But here was their damning defect all this while, *They were ignorant of God's righteousness*: that is, they utterly wanted a spiritual Sight of it; There was not such a spiritual Revelation made unto them of the Holiness of God as is made unto all the Elect: God never appeared unto them by a special discovery of Himself: He was never seen by them in the glory of his Holiness.

These Things being cleared, The *Doctrine* which I would observe is plain, *Doct.*

Sermon 1.

Doct. Those who have the Means of Grace and of Knowledge, and have a Zeal of God, are yet sometimes damningly ignorant of the Righteousness of God.

The Apostle speaking of himself hath these words *Rom. 7. 9. I was alive without the Law once but when the Commandment came Sin revived and I died.* There was a time when he was without the Law, and when the Commandment had not come; and yet he speaketh of the time when he was a Jew, a Pharisee; This was the time when he was without the Law, and when the Commandment had not come to him: The Commandment as discovering and making him know the Holiness or righteousness of God.

There are two Out-goings of *this Perfection* of God, or two Discoveries of it in the Law.

1. In the *Precept*, wherein He giveth a Rule of Exact and perfect Holiness unto the Rational Creature. A Rule that doth require full Conformity to the Will of God, and doth forbid every Deviation therefrom: For the Precept of the Law is a Copy of the Holiness of God, whose Law it is, and God designeth therein to set before us how holy an One He is.

2. In the Law there is another Out-going and display of the Holiness or righteousness of God; that is, in the *Sanction* of the Law. And therein this Righteousness of God is seen: For therein He appeareth as a Sin-revenging God; Therein he doth declare how he will carry it, and what retribution he will render unto Men for Sin.

Now concerning this Righteousness of God the Doctrine tells you, that Those may live fatally and wofully ignorant of it who have

Sermon I.

means of Knowledge and a Zeal of God. For Explication of which Truth I shall only speak to this one Question. *Whence is this, that even such may be thus ignorant of God's righteousness?*

Answ. There are some *External* Causes of it, and some *Internal*; some Things *without* us, and some Things *within* us, which are the Causes of this Ignorance of God's righteousness.

1. As to *External* Causes, I will mention but Two.

1. *The Devil hath an hand in it.* He blindeth the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.

2 *Cor.* 4. 4. The Apostle speaks there of the glory of God's wisdom and grace in the Gospel: yet it is a Truth in the general, that if Mens minds are blinded, it is the Devil that doth muffle their eyes: that is one reason of his name, *The Ruler of the Darkness of this World*, *Eph.* 6. 12. The Devil hath a great hand in the darkness that reigneth over the hearts of Men. He brought it first upon us, He maintaineth it, It is his work and interest to preserve and continue it.

2. *Corrupt Teachers* are a great Cause of Mens ignorance of God's righteousness. The Prophets and the Apostles complain of such; and Christ taxeth them largely in the fifth Chapter of *Matthew*, The Scribes among the Jews were generally such Teachers; They taught their Disciples that the Law of God reacheth indeed unto the *outward* Man in some *external* things; but they never opened it in the *Spirituality* and *exactness* of it, that *he who looketh on a woman to lust after her, committeth Adultery in his heart*, according to the spiritual intention of God in his Law: And the like instances Christ gives in o-
ther

ther Precepts: As there were among *Them* corrupt Teachers, so there are in *our* *Duies* corrupt Teachers, who tell Men they may stand before the holy God with precious, everlasting, and full acceptance *in their own Faith, Repentance, new Evangelical Obedience and righteousness.* This is corrupt teaching. and tends to the damnation of them that receive it: For it darkens their minds as to the glorious holiness and righteousness of that God with whom they have to do.

2. There are some Things *within our selves* which are the *Causes* of this fatal ignorance of the righteousness of God. I shall mention some of them.

1. There is a *Blindness and benumbedness of Conscience.* Mens minds and Consciences are *defiled*, that is the natural condition of the Consciences of all Men. *Tit. 1. 15.* The work and Office of Conscience is to show God's righteousness in the Precept and Threatning; But our minds and Consciences are *defiled*: The Apostle seems to allude to a Glass which is dusty or greasie; you can see nothing perfectly there: So the minds and Consciences of Men naturally being defiled, they do not see the righteousness of God.

2. There is *Alienation from God.* Which is an utter aversion of heart either to *think* of God at all, or take in *right* thoughts concerning Him. This is not only in the *Affections*, but in the very *Mind.* *Col. 1. 21.* *You that sometimes were alienated and Enemies in your minds.* The word rendered *Alienated* is emphatical, and implies our being alienated, *far away*, and utter strangers from God. And this *Strangeness* from God lieth not only in a want of the Knowledge of God,

God, where it ought to be, but it doth contain in it an *aversion* and *untowardness* of heart to take in either *any* thoughts concerning God, or *right* apprehensions of him. The Soul loveth not to think of him as he is, and as he has revealed himself: There is a backwardness and unwillingness to take in such discoveries of God: We would not have God to be as he is; And being *unwilling* of it, hence our minds and apprehensions are *darkned*, and so we are *ignorant* of this righteousness of God.

3. There are in us *false Principles*; And a *mis-application* of true ones: And thence comes this ignorance of God's righteousness. For instance, many a Man takes up that Notion, God cannot be angry with me while he prospers me, cannot be incensed against me while he smiles upon me in his Providence as to outward things. This is a false principle: For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness* of men, however the dispensations of the Providence of God towards them may be. Men judge of God by a *false Rule*; as if the only discovery of the righteousness of God were in the *external* dispensations of his Providence.

And there is also a *Misapplication* of Principles that are true. As for instance; It is a true Principle, that God is pleased with what he enjoyns: But for a Man to apply this to his own out-side and hypocritical performances, and thence to collect that God is pleased with him out of Christ, or with such services as these, betrays him to blind and mistaken conceits concerning the glorious holiness and exact righteousness of God. It is a true Principle, that God is great in Mercy, and doth pardon great Sins: But now to set his
Mercy

Mercy at variance with his Severity, And thence to infer, that therefore he doth not hate every Sin with an infinite eternal detestation, is a wretched misapplication of a true Principle; But thus Men do, by *one* Attribute of God they hide *another* from themselves; They hide his righteousness from their own eyes by his Mercy and Goodness.

4. There are in Men *guilful and treacherous Fears*. They are afraid to think of God, and to believe him to be as he has revealed himself; They feel that such thoughts of Him would shake their confidence, and dash down all their hopes, and would indeed compass them round about with terrors: For Men are naturally Conscions of guiltiness in themselves, and thence there is somewhat of a dread of God in the hearts of all Men: But this Dread of God worketh in a *guilful and treacherous way*, and the Devil and the *deceitfulness* of mens own hearts impose on them to make them shun seeing the holiness and righteousness of God. Hence it comes to pass that men being afraid to see God as he is, the language of their hearts is as the Prophet describes theirs, *Isa. 30. 10, 11. Prophecie to us smooth things, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us*: For these guilty and guilful Fears have begotten in them an hatred of the Light which discovers the righteousness of God, *Job. 3. 20*. They are all conscious to themselves that they are guilty, and therefore obnoxious to the judgment of God: But this makes them eschew right and lively thoughts of the righteousness of God, and makes them desperately unwilling to take them in; so unwilling as that none of the Children of *Adam* ever entertained them with love and likeing and without reluctancy (nor is it possible they should)

should) until some beam of Gospel light concerning the grace of God in Christ do shine in upon them. But those that have any such thoughts of the righteousness of God are forced to bear them, an overpowering hand from God fastning them upon them: Sometimes in a design of love and grace to convert them, by making them despair in themselves and flee unto Christ: Sometimes only to kindle a kind of a secret hell in their bosomes before hand. Whatever the design of God, and the end that he will make with a Soul be, there is in us all naturally so much consciousness of guilt, that when the Lord comes to let in upon us discoveries of the holiness and justice of God there are endless wily wrestlings and desperately wicked windings away of heart from those discoveries and fights, insomuch that if the Lord should not renew and revive them again and again, and hold the Soul under them with a strong hand, none of the Sons of *Adam* would ever entertain them, but would certainly go down to Hell in damning ignorance of the righteousness of God. And there are none whose hearts deal more treacherously with them in this matter, than *theirs* do who have means of knowledge, and light shining in their Consciences more than others: For this light makes them see themselves under much guiltiness before God, and so increaseth and strengtheneth those treacherous fears which make them eschew seeing the glory of God's righteousness, and so are the cause of their remaining ignorant of it.

APPLICATION.

Use. 1. Hence we may see the Reason of Mens living in Sin, and yet being at ease and living secure : It is because they are ignorant of Gods righteousness. It would be impossible Men should ever be at rest in their sinful ways, and in their guilt contracted thereby, if they had spiritual and realizing sights of the Holiness of God before whom they walk, and with whom they have to do. Hence it is that Men Sin and make light of it : As it is said of Esau, *Gen. 25. 34.* He sold his birthright, and when he had done, he eat his Mess of Pottage, and he rose up and went his way : That was all he made of it, tho' he had contracted such a fearful guilt as God would never forgive. So it is with others, they contract great and fearful guilt, such as others wonder how they can live and be at rest under ; but they themselves make light of it : This is the reason thereof, they are Ignorant of Gods Righteousness, they see not how He hateth Sin, and how his Wrath is incensed and burneth against them for it. Hence also it is that Men are so ordinarly and easily drawn into Sin, known Sin; *He that doth Evil hath not seen God*, saith the Apostle, *3 John 11.* For if he had, there would be a restraint and aw upon him, keeping him back from such a course of sinning, which the Apostle there calleth *doing Sin*. To the same purpose is that of the Prophet, *Hos. 4. 1, 2.* *There is no truth nor mercy in the Land ; by swearing, and lying, and killing and stealing, and Comitting adultery they break out, and blood toucheth Blood :* The reason of all this outrage in sinning

finning is expresse in that Word, *ver. 1. There is no knowledge of God in the Land.*

Use. 2. Then put the Enquiry home every one of you to your selves. For you may have knowledge and a zeal of God, and yet be damningly ignorant of Gods righteousness: How is it with you as to that? You have the Means of Grace, and you have Knowledge, I will take it for granted also that you have some Zeal of God, you would fain be accepted with him, and would commend your selves unto him: But for all this, *Examine your selves,* Are you not wofully ignorant of Gods righteousness? Men may go far, take much pains in the ways of God, and yet be miserably ignorant of this righteousness of God, to their utter undoing, It was so with the *Jews*. Three or Four Things will help your Consciences to resolve this, whether you be not fatally ignorant of Gods righteousness?

1. *Have you seen Sins hainousness,* the hainous and spiritual Evil of Sin in its Nature? I do not mean only of some gross and foul Abomination, which makes Conscience ake and cry even in the most blind Sinners: But have you seen an hainousness and malignity in the most inward, seeret, bosom, spiritual Sins? Have you seen such an Evil in it, as that you could from your Heart subscribe unto that Judgment of God, concerning your selves upon the account of it, *I am for this Sin worthy to die Eternally:* For so is the Judgment of God, *Rom. 1. 32.* And the wages of every Sin is Death, *Rom. 6. 23.* If your Hearts have not been brought unto this, to know and own this Judgment of God, *that they which commit such things, even the least of those things, are worthy of Death,* thou art ignorant

of

of Gods righteousness. If you think God deal-
eth hardly with you to be so rigorous, that his
Law is too strict in *forbidding* such and such
Things, and his *Threatning* too severe in de-
nouncing Damnation for them, and *Death to be*
the Wages of the least Sin: If there are such
Thoughts reigning in thy Heart, certainly thou
art damningly ignorant of Gods righteousness,
For when the Spirit of Conviction comes and
discovers Sin to the Soul, how doth he do it?
He comes and shows the Sinner the Glory of
the Holiness of God against whom Sin is com-
mitted; and saith *this is the God against whom*
thou hast sinned, *this is the Glorious Wisdom*
and Holiness which thou hast departed from,
This is the Eternal Righteousness which thou
hast jarred with, and dashed thy self against.
Thus he makes Sin appear to the Soul hainous
indeed: Not mischievous only in the Effects
and Consequents of it, but an hainous and hor-
rible thing in the very Nature of it, because it
is as it were a smiting of God, and a justling with
his Eternal Righteousness. If therefore thou
art without such sights of Sin in the heinousness
of its Nature, thou art ignorant of the Righte-
ousness of God.

2. *When persons shall slight their Sins*, and in-
dulse them in themselves, as things which will
do them little or no hurt, it shows they are ig-
norant of Gods Righteousness. It is so with
some that have a Zeal of God, as the Pharisees
had, and yet indulged themselves in Coveteous-
ness. If thou dost indulse a carnal Earthly
frame of Heart, or the working of any other
Corruption in thy self; if thou canst so far bear
it as not to endeavour to give it a deadly
Wound

Wound in a Gospel way, it is an undeniable Proof thou art desperately ignorant of Gods Righteousness. O that loose-walking and careless-spirited Professors would think sadly of this. You that know matters between God and you are far from well; your walk is uneven, your Spirit unstedfast with God; every feeble foolish Temptation overturns you and prevails against you, and laies you under fresh and flaming guiltiness and defilement: Or if it be not so with you, yet you see there are *secret* Lusts and Distempers in your Bosoms, Formality in Duties of Worship, dead-heartedness to all that is good, an utter neglect of all exercise of that Grace which you once seemed to have, sad coolings at Heart, and woful declensions from that inward warmth and Life which you sometimes had. But tho' these, or such like woful things be found with you, and your Consciences know it, yet your Hearts do not Mourn and Bleed under them, but do secretly make light of them, tho' your Profession be disparaged, and the Name of God which you bear be greatly dishonoured by some of them, and by all of them your seeming Communion with God be prejudiced, or utterly lost: Yet you lay them not to Heart, but bear them lightly, as if they were but the common Spots of all Gods Children, or only Sins of unavoidable daily Incurision. If they were so, yet your Hearts should be wounded by them more than they are: But this unsensibleness of, and unaffectedness with Evils, that are of such a baneful influence do plainly show you take wrong measures to Judge of Sins by, and do not look upon them in the Light of the Righteousness of God, and are therefore ignorant of it.

3. The Soul that doth not see an insufficiency in his own performances and attainments to set him before God with acceptance, hath never seen the righteousness of the God with whom he hath to do. The Jews generally thought their Sacrifices (especially if performed punctually according to the Letter of the Law, and multiplied) would make amends for their Sins, and set them before God with acceptance. There is the like Error found among us: Men are apt to make much of, and magnifie their own Performances and Attainments, as if these were the things in which they must stand before God for acceptance unto Eternal Life. But *that* Soul who hath never seen such a defectiveness and defilement in all his ways and Performances as that they will undo and damn him if he stand in them before God for Justification, *that* Soul is still fatally ignorant of Gods Righteousness. The Apostle counts all his own righteousness Dung Lofs and Dross for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ. Dross if a Man take it for Silver, will make him a Beggar at last, and Dung will defile him. It is true, Duties of Obedience and exercises of Grace are precious, as they come from the Spirit of God and are wrought in us by him: But as performed by us, and if we look unto them for Justification, to stand in them before God for the acceptance of our Persons to Eternal Life, they will undo us, we shall find them prove but as Dross and filthy Rags.

If a Man look upon a thing in the Twilight, he may see a few Spots perhaps; but bring it into the Beams of the Sun, and then there will appear abundance of flaws and defects. So

it is when a Soul stands in the Sunshine of Gods Holiness and Righteousness, when *that* shines upon him and upon his Performances, he seeth then such innumerable Motes of Sin mingled with all his Duties, and swarming in his Heart, as that they are polluted and very defective; they are such as he dares not stand in before God, they are but Dung they are but filthy Rags in the Judgment of that Soul who has seen the Righteousness of God.

4. He that hath never seen an Absolute necessity of Christ's Righteousness wherein to stand before God, he hath never seen Gods Righteousness. Gods Righteousness shineth out in the Law: There is no Righteousness answereth the demands of the Justice and Law of God on the behalf of sinful Creatures but Christ's Righteousness only. *Adam's* Righteousness or Angels Righteousness would have answered the demands of Gods Justice for us while we stood: But for *sinful* Creatures nothing will answer the demands of God but Christ's Righteousness; For *that* hath suffering in it to answer the *Penalty*, and Obedience to answer the *Precept*. We must have both or we are undone, such is the Righteousness of God that it standeth upon and will have both: And this the Soul sees, and thence it sees an Absolute necessity of Christ's Righteousness to be upon it, that it may stand before God with acceptance.

Use. 3. Take heed to your selves; seeing those that have Knowledge and a Zeal of God may yet be fatally ignorant of God's Righteousness, take heed to your selves, *that this be not your Case*. We have the more need to take heed of it, because there is by Nature a deep and strong aversion

aversion in our Minds to entertain due discoveries of the Holiness and Righteousness of God with whom we have to do: We are apt to measure him by our selves; Therefore God so speaks to the wicked, *These things hast thou done and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thy self,* Psall. 50. 21. When we are driven from such gross ignorance of the Righteousness of God, as to think he will connive at us in our sinful wicked ways, yet we are loth to entertain the thoughts of such an exact perfection of Holiness in God as to think that he will not accept of our Performances, or of our Persons for our Performances, when they are the best have or can do. Take heed therefore unto your selves: For,

I. This ignorance of Gods Righteousness is pernicious and damning in it self: But not only so, (for so is every Sin) but this ignorance hath a singular influence and efficacy to undo and ruine Souls. While it remaineth upon thee, thou art out of the Road and reach of Mercy; what the Prophet *Isaiah* speaks, chap. 27. 11. may be justly applied to ignorance of the Righteousness of God, *This is a People of no understanding* (saith he) what then? *Therefore he that made them will not have Mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour*: Ignorance of Gods Righteousness is not only a Sin in it self as all other Sins are, and deserves Eternal death as all other Sins do; but it bars up the Door of mercy against a Soul, and keeps it far off from Mercy while it remains in this ignorance. For it is a plain case, and that which every Mans Conscience must subscribe unto. Suppose you should hear a poor distressed Creature

ture under horror of Conscience say of himself, and therein say but the very truth. The Day is yet to dawn that ever the Glorious Holiness and Righteousness of the Blessed God shone out into this Heart of mine; I never saw either it, or Sin in its heinousness as 'tis against that Righteousness: I have indeed heard of these things with the hearing of the Ear, but I never believed them, they were never made real to me. What would you think of one that speaks thus against himself, and is as he speaks? Methinks I hear your Hearts answering, but trembling as they answer, Oh that Soul must needs be far from Mercy, his Estate is fearful and forlorn. Well, your own Hearts have condemned you. While you are ignorant of Gods Righteousness this is your case, thus it is with you. If Mercy suffer you to continue ignorant of Gods Righteousness, Mercy will also suffer you to be thrown down into Hell and be damned there. For when God begins to show Mercy unto a Soul, and break in upon it graciously, the first thing he doth is, He appears to it in his Glory, he reveals his Righteousness and discovers to it his own Holiness. Know therefore, while you are ignorant of Gods Righteousness you are very far off from saving Grace, there is not the least beginning of a Work of Salvation wrought upon you.

2. Ignorance of God's Righteousness is a Canker and Worm at the root of all your attainments, yea, of all God's impressions in working on you. Its true, 'tis possible you may savour and relish the Word, the Gospel may be somewhat sweet unto you, you may possibly have *high thoughts* of Christ, and of an interest in him, but if this be not
laid

laid at the bottom, if there be not a discovery of God's Righteousness let in upon thy Soul, all thy tast of Christ will be but a vanishing slight taste; and so it will be with every thing which you have wrought in you, or do attain: whatever you attain you will be but an hypocrite, and whatever you do, will be but an act of hypocrisy before God: You cannot pray or confess or mourn over Sin or close with Christ, you can do none of those things on which the Salvation of your Soul lies, you can do none of them *rightly and unto God* as long as you are thus fatally ignorant of God's Righteousness. The truth of it is, there never was a Soul thus ignorant of the Righteousness of God but he lived in some Sin or other, *Paul* while he was ignorant of God's Righteousness, persecuted the Church and imbrued his hands in the blood of the Saints. And Christ tells his Disciples, that because the World *knew not his Father that sent him*, therefore they would persecute and hate him and his Disciples, *Joh. 15. 21.* And hence also it is, that many do so desperately adhere unto and are so deeply plunged in self devised waies to pacifie Conscience and make their peace with God, it is from their ignorance of God's Righteousness: For if they did but see how holy God is with whom they have to do, these things which they adhere to would appear to them vain courses, foolish devises, and things neither to be rested on, nor indeed used: But this ignorance of God's Righteousness is a root-evil from which other evils, and they many and great, will spring up.

But upon all this some may say, *How shall we attain a sight and knowledge of God's Righteousness?*
I answer,

1. You must endeavour to see it in those Glasses where it shineth forth to us, viz. in the Works, and in the Word of God.

(1.) There are discoveries of it (tho' more dark) in the Works of God. *The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. 1. 18.* Spiritual strokes and judgments upon the Souls of Men are the things he there instances in, as revelations of the wrath of God, namely those vile, debasing, sottish Lusts, and other palpable wickedness which reigned among the wisest, and most learned and vertuous of the Gentiles: In these, as they were punishments inflicted on them by the revenging justice of God, did the Righteousness of God shine forth in *that* Age. In like manner at *this* day the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven in the efficacy of that *delusion* to which the *Popish* generation is given up by Him, *that they may be damned* for not receiving the Truth in the love of it. 2 *Thes.* 2. 11, 12. And also in the prevailing of the foolish, sottish delusions of *Mahometanism* over the Eastern and Southern parts of the World, to which God in his righteous and dreadful wrath hath given them up for their wildness and wantonness in the things of God, and for their bringing of *Images* into his Worship. And lastly, in the strange judgment which lies upon the *Jewish* nation at this day; their condition being such as no People under the whole Heavens are in the like, nor ever were, all things considered: They are not only dispersed, despised, and abhorred throughout the World, and their name left for a Curse; but most astonishing blindness and hardness of heart are upon them;

them: On the account whereof they are me-
thinks set forth by God as *Pillars of Salt* and
Monuments of his *Vengeance*.

(2.) God's Righteousness shines forth emi-
nently in his *Word*. There you have the *Law* of
God both in its *Precept*, and *Threatning* and there
you read of the dreadful *Executions* of those
Threatnings. In the *Precept* of the *Law*; See
the Exactness and spirituality of *that*, how far
it reacheth, how *exceeding broad* it is, how se-
vere its injunctions are. Then look into the
Threatnings; There you will see God's indigna-
tion burning against Sin. Look into the *Exe-*
cution of the Threatnings: There you will find
some Instances of God's Severity wherein his
Righteousness sparkleth out. The Old World
was guilty of great Violence; God swept them
away, destroyed a World of Men and Women
at once for their Sins. *Israel*, that professing
people, fell by fornication, God slew *three and*
twenty thousand of them for that Sin in one day,
1 Cor. 10. 8. So did the fire of his anger break
out against them. *Uzzah* did but *put forth his*
hand to stay the *Ark* when the Oxen stumbled,
and God smote him dead in the place; *the Lord*
was not sought after the due order. 1 Cor. 13. 9, 10.
and chap. 15. 13. The *Beithshemites* look into
the *Ark*, being surprised it may be, and carried
out with an inordinate joy at its miraculous re-
turn; Ay but that Sin of looking into the *Ark*,
tho' it seems to be so small, yet the holy God
sets it forth in the blood of *fifty thousand* that
were slain by his hand, 1 Sam. 6. 19, 20. in
these instances God came forth and shewed his
Righteousness which I am speaking of.

But besides *these* Executions; if you look into

Hell, there you may see displaies of God's wrath, how Holy he is. Oh how many are damned for those very Sins which thou makest light of, nay it may be for less. And it is certain there are many there, lying under the strokes of God's wrath for less guilt and fewer sins than the youngest sinner of us this day have to charge our selves with.

But yet further, Of all the *Examples* of the wrath of God, and his threatening against Sin, there is none displayeth his Righteousness and the terror of it, like *that* of his wrath and Curse coming upon Christ: *He was made a Curse*; it is the expression of the Holy Ghost, *Gal. 3. 13.* tho' he was himself *God over all blessed for ever*, yet he was made a Curse. Now that the Son of God *who did no Sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*, who was the *Lamb of God without blemish and without Spot*; that HE should be made a *Curse*, that God should awaken his sword against *Him*, execute the threatening of his Law upon *Him*, it is a great display of the Righteousness of God: *He hath set forth Him to declare his righteousness, Rom. 3. 25, 26.* What are millions of meer creatures compared to the Son of God, not so loved, not so delighted in by the Lord as he is? Notwithstanding God's love to, and delight in him, if he comes but under the shadow of Sin, under sins *imputation*, the wrath of God flames against him, kindles and burns upon him.

Thus you should labour to see Gods Righteousness in these Glasses wherein it is set forth, both in the *Works* of God; and in his *Word*; particularly in the Law, in its Threatnings, and in their Execution; most eminently in their Execution and taking place upon Christ Himself.

2. *Improve*

2. *Improve and follow on the glimmering light you have about the Righteousness of God.* Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: *Hof. 6. 3.* Men shut their eyes against the Light, and turn away their thoughts and withdraw their minds from the discoveries of God, they are loth to behold God to be a holy God. This is oftentimes from the forenesh and weakness of Conscience; the weak blear Eye cannot look in the face of the Sun; So a guilty Conscience loves not that God should appear as he is, cannot endure the thoughts of him, they become terrible unto it. And certain it is, *that* Conscience which hath much guilt upon it, especially guilt contracted by sinning against light, is either strangely benighted and cast into a dungeon of darkness, or else a right sight of the righteousness of God must needs be terrible unto it.

3. *Beg of God to reveal himself and his righteousness unto you* It is in *this* as it is in all the other Perfections of God; we know not how (of our selves) to take in right and real apprehensions of him: you can no more see and believe the *Righteousness* of God, than you can the *grace* and *mercy* of God, unless God himself shine in upon your darkness: Beg of him therefore to discover himself and reveal himself in the glory of his righteousness.

Use. 4. If those that have the means of the knowledge of God, and a Zeal of God, are yet sometimes ignorant of the Righteousness of God, and *that* to their utter and everlasting undoing, Oh! *What cause of Thankfulness* have those among you, to whom God hath been pleased to reveal this righteousness! May men have much knowledge in *many things* of God, and yet fall short

short as to *this* knowledge of his righteousness; and hath the Lord appeared unto you in his glory, and filled your hearts with lively and affecting thoughts of the holiness and righteousness of that God before whom you walk and with whom you have to do; it is an unspeakable mercy. There are three Things always attend it, if you have such a discovery.

1. Thy heart hath been brought to yield thy self up as *lost and undone*, because of thy unholiness and unlikeness to this holy Lord God. Yea more, you not only see your selves *undone*, and are convinced of it; but you come to *abhor* your selves and *lothe* your selves for such your unholiness. *Job. 42. 5, 6.* thou hast laid thy mouth in the dust, thou hast *repented in dust and ashes*; laid thy neck upon the block, and said, I am worthy O Lord to be abhorred before thee for ever, because thou art righteous and I am unholy.

2. All right and thorow sights of the Righteousness of God have ever made the soul restless till it fly and betake it self unto the Righteousness of Christ, as that *alone in which it desireth to be found*, as that which it would have to stand in before God. True Sights of the Righteousness of God will drive the Soul out of all those foolish confidences and rotten buildings which we are apt to make unto our selves naturally.

3. Such Sights of the Righteousness of God have somewhat of an *abiding influence upon the heart*, so as that the Soul constantly walketh more or less as before an *holy* God. This indeed is more *sensible* when the Soul is in a lively frame, and not under Temptations; but it constantly causeth the Soul more or less to walk

as before a holy God: according to that of David, *Psal. 16. 8. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.* Thou dost not only lament sin past, but art afraid of Sin in thy *Course and walk*; thou hast an awe of God upon thy Spirit, a dread of Sin, and a desire to be *conformed unto the holiness of God*, you would be like him. Such a Sight of God's Righteousness doth ever make the Soul to hate Sin; *whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not; whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him.* 1 Joh. 3. 6. He that hath seen God in his holiness, he sinneth not with delight, but maintaineth a watch against Sin, a detestation of Sin is kept up in his mind. Yea more, the Soul that hath thus seen the righteousness of God, it adoreth, loveth, cleaveth unto God for that Righteousness of his, which also is in some measure written upon his own heart. He rejoyceth or giveth thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness, *Psal. 30. 4.* such a Soul chooseth blesteth and boasteth it self in God; it the rather loveth and cleaveth unto God because he is a God of such *glorious and unspotted Righteousness* as the Soul hath seen him to be.

SERMON

S E R M O N. II.

R O M A N S. X. III.

Going about to Establish their own righteousness.

THE Apostle is discoursing of that awful thing of *casting off the Jews*, which was brought about by their *own Sin*; which Sin was not that outrageous violence that was in the Old World, or the Sin of Idolatry, but it was neglect and refusing of Jesus Christ, *they stumbled at that stumbling Stone*. The words I have read declare somewhat of *this*; the Sin through which they came to be broken off from being God's People. There are Three things the Apostle declareth to us concerning it; all of them fatal and ruining. 1. Ignorance of God's Righteousness. 2. They went about to establish their own. 3. They did not submit themselves unto the Righteousness of Christ. The first of these I have spoken of; I design to speak a little to the other, *they went about, and sought to establish their own righteousness*.

The expression of the Apostle is to be observed, he doth not say they laboured after a righteousness of their own, or in themselves; this might in some sense have been allowable,
 God

God commandeth us to be holy as he is holy: but they went about to *establiſh* a righteousness of their own, to set it up and make it stand, and that before God, for the acceptance of their Persons unto justification of life. This is the crime that the Apostle layeth to their charge, that they went about to *establiſh* their own righteousness before God, *as that in which they would stand before him* for acceptance. The Persons upon whom he layeth this charge were the Jews, Persons to whom the oracles of God were committed, Chap. 3. 2. *Act.* 7. 38. They had the covenants *Rom.* 9. 4. Persons that were not grossly profane, or altogether ignorant and unconcerned about the condition of their Souls, they had a Zeal of God, Chap. 10. 2. tho' that Zeal was mingled with, and under the influence of ruining ignorance and darkness.

The Point I would insist upon is this; *That they that have means of grace, and awakenedness of conscience and some Zeal for God, may yet sometimes seek to establiſh their own righteousness.* The Apostle Paul giveth an instance in himself as to this thing, it was thus once with him, he telleth us there were things he did once account his gain, *Phil.* 3. 7. what things! they were things of his own, things that he calleth his own righteousness, ver. 9. of that Chapter. These things he did once account gain, thought to have lived upon them and died with them, as Spiritual and Eternal things. It is the same thing, which the Apostle saith of the Jews, in the Chapter preceeding my Text, *v.* 32 *as it were by the works of the Law.* They sought righteousness, but they did not like to seek after it in the way of free grace; to receive it of
free

free Gift from God, but sought after it *as it were by the Works of the Law*. Tho' they were convinced, there was guilt upon them, and an imperfection in their Works, yet they sought after Righteousness as it were by the Works of the Law; tho' not in a perfect conformity to the Moral Law, yet in a way like it, *as it were by the Works of the Law*.

Three things I would Speak unto to make way for the Application. 1. What is this Righteousness of Mens own? 2. What is this seeking to Establish it? 3. How come Men to be guilty of this folly and Wickedness, to seek to Establish their own Righteousness, even Men that have some awakenedness of Conscience, and Zeal for God?

First, *What is meant by Mens own righteousness?* All Righteousness is a Conformity unto the Precept; when Men are what God commands them to be: Mens own Righteousness is somewhat in themselves that is conformable to the Precept of the Law; somewhat that either is so in Truth, or which they take so to be; Mens own Righteousness therefore the Apostle describeth *to be after the Law*, not having my own Righteousness (saith he) *which is of the Law*; that is, somewhat called for by, and agreeing with the Law, It is a comprehensive Word, [Mens own Righteousness] therefore there are many Parts and Branches of that thing which Men seek to set up as a Righteousness of their own, instead of, and in opposition to the Righteousness of God.

1. Sometimes Men make *superstitious Vanities* their own Righteousness. Thus it is with the *Popish* Generation who set up *Pater-Nosters*,
Penances,

Penances, Ave-Maria's Pilgrimages, Habits, Orders, &c. These are all of them superstitious Vanities, yet these they make their own Righteousness, wherein to stand before God for Acceptance with him. There are some who are not altogether so blind and ignorant as they, that yet make such like things their Righteousness.

2. Sometimes Men make their Spiritual and outward Priviledges, their righteousness; set up and establish these in opposition to the righteousness that is by faith: *Circumcised the eighth day, of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the Law, a Pharisee;* saith the Apostle concerning himself, *Phil. 3. 5.* These were the things that he once thought to live upon, and stand in: And this was a general and reigning Evil among the Jews in Christ's day: *John the Baptist (Mat. 3. 9, 10.)* Speaks to them, *Say not within your selves, we have Abraham to our Father, Being Children of Abraham was that which they set up, against all the convictions of their undone condition, which by his Ministry they were led unto; So we find them alledging again, even to Christ himself, Abraham is our Father, Job. 8. 39.* It is the same Sin that is among us; if any bear up themselves under convictions of guiltiness, by such Thoughts as these, *I am a Child of Godly Parents, I have been baptized, &c.* Nay, it is possible Men may deceive and delude themselves by reflecting upon higher Priviledges; *I am a Member of a Church, admitted to the Table of the Lord, I bear the name of the Lord, am in Covenant with him, that is in an external Covenant; Thus are Men baughty because of God's*
holy

holy Mountain, Zeph. 3. 11. and their own deluded Consciences cry to them as sometimes they did Jer. 7. 4. The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are we, yet they trusted in lying Words: So when Men bolster up their Hearts with such Thoughts; this is a righteousness of their own, which Men are guilty of going about to establish.

3. Mens own Righteousness containeth their outward Performances and Practices; their abstaining and being clear from such and such Sins, walking in such and such ways. It was thus with the *Pharisee* whom Christ speaketh of *Luke 18.* He standeth and strutteth before God, *I thank God I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican;* Men may make clean their own ways in their own Eyes, and especially if it be a way made clean after it was polluted and filthy. When a Man hath left off Sins, and hath reformed; left off those Sins which he once lived in, and is gotten free and disentangled from those evils which he was in formerly; it is very possible he may make *this Reformation* his own Righteousness: So likewise, Duties performed by them, Reading, Praying, keeping Sabbaths, secret Duties, Meditation and the like; thus the *Pharisee, I fast twice in the Week; give tithes of all that I possess.* The same thing is incident to us; to set up and Establish our own performances, our own blamelessness, or the shiningness of our Conversations, as our Righteousness before God.

4. This Righteousness of Mens own containeth not only their outward Performances; but it containeth in it their *Internal Attainments,*

as spiritual Gifts, Light, Knowledge, understanding in the things of God. There were some among the *Jews* that boasted and bore themselves high upon the account of these things, *They were Guides of the Blind, lights to them which were in darkness, Instructors of the Foolish*; as the Apostle speaketh, *Rom. 2. 19. 20.* When Men shall Advance and set up not only these things; but the very *inward workings of their own Affections and Hearts under the impressions and touches of the Spirit of God*, to be their Righteousness in his sight, how sad is it! I not only pray (saith one) but pray with *Affection*; I not only amend and leave off Sin, but I *mourn* over Sin and *Condemn* my self for it: And what lack they now to commend them to God, that they may find Eternal acceptance with him, seeing they Pray, and Pray with enlargedness of Heart? if they prayed, and were altogether *hard Hearted* in Prayer, they could have no confidence in it, but *now* they think they are well enough. The *resting* on these things undoeth many a Soul. The Light which shines in the Faces and Consciences of Men in these Days of the Gospel is ordinarily so clear, as that many cannot rest in outward Reformations and Duties; but are forced to go down into their own Hearts; and finding something there like the Gracious presence of God, the Devil cozens them with it, and makes them *rest* upon it, as a Righteousness to commend them to God for his acceptance. It is possible Men may set up a conceited false Repentance and brokenness of Heart in the room of the Righteousness of Christ, for pacifying their Consciences, and to commend them to God for acceptance unto

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Eternal

Eternal Life. And some Men teach that *Repenting, Mourning, Believing* are indeed *our righteousness* before God ; our *Subordinate* Righteousness they call it, Subordinate unto Christ's Righteousness, but *our Righteousness* they Teach it to be, wherein we are to stand justified before God. They say we are accepted unto Eternal Life, pardoned, and adopted for our repenting and believing : This is another Gospel this is plainly to *Establish* these things which are our *own*, to *Establish* them as *our* Righteousness. In a Word, whatsoever is our *own*, may, through our dark blinded and deceitful Hearts, be set up and made a Righteousness wherein we would stand before God.

Secondly, *What is this establishing of our own righteousness, or seeking to Establish it ?* For Men can never make it stand, God will dash it in pieces, and cast it down, therefore the Apostle phraseth it so, they *went about* to Establish their own righteousness, they did attempt, and endeavour it, tho' it was a vain and wicked attempt. But when do Men seek to Establish their own righteousness ?

1. *When they endeavour to put it to any of those Uses, which Christ and his Righteousness are ordained for by God.* The Righteousness of Christ is to pacifie the Wrath of God, satisfy the Justice of God, to be the Price of all that Mercy and Good that we stand in need of ; When Men shall put any thing of their own to this Use ; shall think either to turn away the Wrath of God thereby, in a way of Satisfaction and Attonement, or obtain and procure in a way of purchase *any good* at Gods Hand, by any thing of their own, tho' it may possibly be not so great

great a matter as *Heaven* and *Eternal Life*; yet if it be the *least* good, a crum of Bread, a drop of Water, that you expect from God, for any thing you do, or attain, or perform your selves, it is so far a going about to Establish your own righteousness; because it is *Christ* and *his* Righteousness, that is our *Title* unto the *least outward Mercy*, as well as to the great things of *Eternal Life*; we have no right unto any Mercy whatsoever, but in *Christ*, and upon his account, *in him all the Promises are yea and Amen*, all the Promises even for *this Life*, as well as for the *other*. When Men have their Consciences set a flaming by the guilt of Sin, if they overlook the Righteousness of *Christ*, and cleave to their own amendment and repenting, it is an establishing their own righteousness, if by these things they seek Peace with God, or the pacifying their own Consciences.

2. Men go about to establish their own righteousness, *when they would make it a step to help them unto Christ's Righteousness*. We have generally under the hearing of the Gospel some conviction upon us, that it is *Christ's* Righteousness, in which we must stand unto eternal Life; yet our Hearts are apt to deceive and betray us about the *way how*, and upon what account we may get an interest in this Righteousness of *Christ*: Here our Hearts are apt to whisper to us, that we must have his Righteousness, *for* our repenting and believing, this is to make our own righteousness a step to *Christ's*, as *that* which doth entitle us unto, procure and obtain for us, an interest in the Righteousness of *Christ*, whereas the way of the Gospel is, that *Christ's* Righteousness is *given*, of *meer*

Grace, imputed and reckoned unto us *freely*; and our repentance and faith have no such hand therein, as to procure us an interest in the Righteousness of Christ. It is true, God Justifieth by Faith and the Righteousness of Christ is *unto all and upon all that believe*, Rom. 3. 22, but yet our believing and repenting do not *procure* us an interest in the Righteousness of Christ, *that* was wrought out for us by Christ, designed for us by God, without an eye to our faith or repentance; repenting and faith are fruits of the Righteousness of Christ; so the Apostle telleth us, Phil. 1. 29. *unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ—to believe on him*. 2 Pet. 1. 1. *to them that have obtained through the Righteousness of God our Saviour like precious faith with us*; Faith is allotted to us, (so the word there used signifieth) it is allotted to us, *through the Righteousness of Christ*, so it is, that we came to have faith wrought in us; Our believing and repenting have no influence by way of motive unto God, to prevail with him to give the Righteousness of Christ unto us, more than to others; but as he *purposed* within himself absolutely and *freely*, so he *giveth* it.

3. Men seek to establish their own righteousness *when they join it with Christ's Righteousness*; Christ's Righteousness is to do a part, and their own a part, wherein their own cometh short, and is defective, *that they think Christ must make amends for, and make up*. God's constitution is, that we must stand *wholly* in the Righteousness of Christ, and that is compleat and perfect, neither needing, or being capable of any addition or amendment: To join our own righteousness with Christs, is the going about
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to establish it, when we put it, *tho' but in part*, to any of the same uses, or make it serve unto the same ends, for which Christ and his Righteousness are ordained of God.

Thirdly, *How cometh this to be incident to them that have the means of grace, some awakenedness of Conscience, and some Zeal of God, how come these to seek to establish their own righteousness?*

1. One cause is that which the Apostle mentioneth before; *Ignorance of the righteousness of God*: They see not how *holy* an one he is with whom they have to do, how pure exact and strict the demands of his justice are in his Law; they are ignorant of *God's Righteousness*, it is *God's Righteousness* in his Law that we have to do with: Hence all the demands of *that* must be answered and satisfied; its demand from *innocent* Man is perfect Obedience; from *guilty* creatures, satisfaction for Sins already committed, and perfect Obedience for the time to come, as the Price of all the Mercy to be communicated. The breadth and exactness of this Righteousness is that which Men are ignorant of; which is so exact, as that it will never accept of us, or be at peace with us, without full satisfaction to all its demands; hence if there be the least failure in answering the *Curse*, or the least defect in coming up unto the spirituality of the *Precept*, in what it requireth, the Person is lost and gone for ever: This is the Righteousness of God, and this Men are ignorant of; it shineth not out into their Hearts in the spiritual Glory of it, hence they go about to Establish their own righteousness; but the Soul that seeth this, would be under a necessity to despair of standing in any righteousness of his own.

2. *There is selfishness in Men, Self-love, Self-flattering, and Pride, these are another Cause.* I may comprise them all under *selfishness* of Heart; we would fain be as *much* as is possible in the matter of our own Salvation and acceptance unto Life; there is a secret Principle at the bottom of our Hearts, which maketh us seek and desire this. It was implanted in us at our first Creation, and thence it was allowable and good under the first Covenant, that our own Obedience should be the Righteousness in which we were accepted; but in our *fallen* Condition, it is abominable and wicked, as well as foolish and vain; Therefore in our fallen Condition, it is pride and lifting up our selves against God, and his way with us; God is laying us under Condemnation, and the Sin of our first Parents hath put us past any possibility of our standing in our own righteousness; Judgment and Condemnation is come upon us: Now for our Hearts in this Condition, to go about to Establish our own righteousness, it is indeed a fighting against God, a quarelling with him. But such a thing there is in us, such Self-love, Self-flattery, and Pride of Heart: There is Self-love, and Self-flattery, hence we are apt to take Pride in any thing of our own Attainments and Performances, they glitter in our Eyes, are great things; and they are so, because they are our *own*; that Propriety and Interest in them, as they are our own, maketh our foolish Hearts fond and doat on them; this is from our Self-love. It is natural to desire to *do* somewhat, and *be* somewhat, it is an inclination concreated with us, as we were set under the first Covenant for Life, and *then* it was

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(as I said) lawful, but now it is found with us still, and it is wicked now, because the Case is altered, our Condition and State is changed, we are sinners, *dead in Trespasses and Sins*, and so can do nothing that is good while in that State.

3. *The sublimeness, mysteriousness, and supernaturalness of that Righteousness of God, which we are to submit our selves unto, is another Cause, from whence Men are apt to seek to establish their own righteousness.* There is a sublimeness, a supernaturalness in the way of God, a mysteriousness in submitting our selves unto the Righteousness of God, it is supernatural; not only above *corrupted Nature*, above that darkness and depravedness that is now upon our Minds and Consciences, but it is above that Light and Knowledge that was implanted in them, at our *first Creation*, All that *Adam* knew of the way of being saved, was to be saved by a righteousness of his *own*, to stand in his own perfect Holiness and Obedience; he knew no other: The Law under which he was made, spake of no other, there was no other revealed from *without*, or intimated by any thing from *within*: The Righteousness of God that is upon us in this way of Believing, is *supernatural*, it is therefore sublime and mysterious; there are astonishing Mysteries heaped up one upon another in this way of Salvation. *That one should stand in a righteousness brought in by another*: That is a Mystery. *That a Sinner should stand as righteous any way*; that is a further Mystery, a thing never heard of under the first Covenant. *Adam* with all his Light and Knowledge had no Notice, no Apprehension of such a thing.

But how a sinful Man, a Worm, Dust, a Rebel against God, a condemned Traytor, should be Righteous with the Righteousness of the Son of God, and should stand in Gods own Righteousness; this is a further Mystery and a sublime thing in this way of God. Again, That this Righteousness of him that is the Son of God, should be such as fully Answers all the demands of the Law and Justice of God, on the behalf of Sinners, is yet more mysterious: For if you will suppose that he who is God should be made under the Precept, yet how astonishing is it, that he should come under the Curse of the Law, have that inflicted upon him, and so satisfy the Justice of God. When all these Riddles are resolved in the Consciences of awakened sinners, through the Light of the Gospel, there is yet a further Mystery, how this Righteousness of Christ should be made theirs? Tho' brought in for Sinners and wrought out for them, in such a stupendious way, yet how should it come to be theirs? Mens natural reason will say, surely they must do some great thing, work some great Heroick Acts of Obedience, somewhat or other they must do; but that it should be ours in a way of free Grace, free Gift (they are the Apostles Words, *the Gift of Righteousness. Rom. 5.17.*) That it should be reckoned unto us, and reckoned freely, that it should be reckoned unto us in the way of believing, that it should be unto all, and upon all that believe, and that without difference, this is very astonishing and far beyond the Apprehensions and Thoughts of Men. There is in all the Parts and Passages of our being saved, and standing in this Righteousness of Christ, a sublimeness and mysteriousness.

4. By Nature we make the satisfaction of our Lusts our greatest good, they are our Gods, the pursuing and enjoying of them is that which our Hearts are set upon; When once the Soul cometh to be convinced, and awakened, he findeth himself dreadfully mistaken, in his former thoughts, and seeth that the way in which he placed his greatest good, was his greatest evil; wherein he sought *Life*, and wherein he lived, he was therein working out Death; the pursuing and satisfying the Lusts of his Heart, when he is once convinced, he seeth it hath been the Ruin of his Soul: Now heing made to know, by this new new light, that Sin hath been thus mischievous; dark depraved Reason doth make his very Conscience ready to Judge, that if Sin, his *own Sin* hath been his greatest evil, then his Obedience must be his greatest good. But the inference is false and fallacious and quite contrary unto the counsel and way of God: for altho our own Sins have been our undoing and our Ruin; yet God will have Christ to be our Righteousness, not our selves, not any thing in our selves, or done by our selves.

APPLICATION.

Use. 1. If there be such a thing found in Men (that have means of Grace, some awakenedness of Conscience and some Zeal of God,) as seeking to establish their own righteousness, it may unriddle or render an account of some of the dark astonishing ways of God with such Souls as are inlightened and awakened, that have concernedness of Heart upon them how things are between God and them, how they shall stand before

fore him, and find acceptance with him. For even towards such on whom God hath broken in with convictions, he doth sometimes walk in bitter and terrible ways. I will instance but in three. And the Point in hand giveth you an account of them.

1. *God letteth loose the Sin that dwelleth in them, unto sensibly more hideous workings than ever they had experience of before.* When the Commandment came, saith the Apostle, what doth he mean by that? When he had some spiritual light let in upon his mind, concerning the exactness and strictness, and breadth of the Commandment, that it did require such and such Obedience from him, and condemned him for his falling short thereof, *when the commandment came Sin revived, Rom. 7. 9.* He openeth himself further *vers. 13.* *Sin saith he, by the commandment became exceeding sinful,* appeared to be Sin, and became exceeding sinful, the corruption of his Heart appeared to his experience and feeling to be exceeding sinful, he never saw it so before, never felt it so before, never felt such hideous workings of it within his bosome before, as he did then. It is the bitter experience of many Souls, when conscience cometh to be touched, and awakened a little, and they set themselves to deal with God about peace and everlasting Life, there are such motions of Sin within them, as they never had before, blasphemous Thoughts, Dispair, Risings of Heart against God, and innumerable workings of original Sin, God letteth it loose; yea, it is no unusual thing with God, after the first conviction, to let corruption loose, and prevail so far, as that the Sinner shall be cast down, it may be into the Puddle
of

of some filthy Lust. The bottom of this lieth here; God seeth the Soul in danger, or prone to go about to establish his own righteousness, therefore God taketh off the restraints, whereby Sin was chained up before, and the Sow perhaps walloweth in the Mire: God taketh off those restraints and when he hath let corruption loose and the Soul is fallen into some woful Sin, then God turneth upon him, and saith *Art thou Righteous!* Look within, into thy own Bosom, see what a Nature thou hast, *thou righteous*, who art such a wicked Creature, such a Beast, such a Devil as thou appearest now to be, even to the reflections of thine own Heart!

2. Another of those dark ways of God, towards awakened Sinners is this. *God withdraweth his wonted assistance*, leaveth them to darkness, hardness, straitness, and they are shut up under these things as in a Prison-House and Dungeon. It may be, under first convictions, you could Pray, Cry and Weep. Ay, by these things you were going about to establish your own righteousness, and God seeth thou art going to set them up as thy righteousness, God doth therefore dash that Idol to pieces before thine eyes, and God leaveth thee shut up under a dead, hardned frame of Heart. Thou hast it may be, convictions abiding, and thou canst go and tell God sad and true Stories against thy self, but with a Heart as remorseless, and unrelenting, as a piece of the nether Millstone; now God withdraweth those former breathings of his Spirit, with which thy Heart was formerly touched, that he may prevent thee from going about to establish thy own righteousness. And when

when he hath as I may say, tired and wearied thee out, with Scruples and endless turmoilings, within thy self, God cometh and saith, *thou righteous, see what thou art*, thy Conscience knoweth and telleth thee, thou must repent, believe and Pray and deal with God after another manner, at another rate, than yet thou dost; thou hast tryed and strugled thus long with thy own Heart, and thou art yet rather farther carried down the Stream and plunged farther into the Dungeon of Sin. God seeth you are establishing your own righteousness, and *that* maketh him walk in this way towards you.

3. Hence likewise it is, that *God sometimes breaketh in upon the Conscience of a poor Creature, with new armies of terrors*; The Soul had been affrighted at first conviction, which had startled and awakened it and begot some Zeal of God; But the Soul going about to establish a righteousness of its own; what way doth God take! He breaketh in with new Terrors: And these new Terrors are begotten, sometimes by letting it fall into some such evil as shall wound Conscience exceedingly; Sometimes they are begot by setting before the eye of the Soul, old Sins, some former Sin it may be the Sins of Youth and Childhood; Sometimes these fresh Terrors are begotten by discoveries that God maketh of his *own holiness*, and of his severity in his Law, how he standeth upon it, and will be strict and inexorable therein, and will have a *perfect* Righteousness for every Soul whom he doth accept, a perfect Righteousness that shall Answer all the demands of Justice in the Moral-Law; hence, even from the *Precept* of the Law,

Law, and discovery of the glorious Holiness of God that shineth therein, God wrappeth Death and Condemnation about the Sinners Head ; I require in my Law, such and such Obedience saith God, the filling up of all Relations with the proper business thereof, of all Duties with suitable Grace thereunto, I allow or admit of *no defect* ; and withal God letteth the Soul see his own endless short-comings herein, nay sometimes God taketh a Mans praying, hearing, and spiritual Services, and spreadeth them on his Face as Dung, and wrappeth them about him as Death and Condemnation.

Thou art going about to establish thy own righteousness, that is the reason of *this* way of God. Sometimes God displayeth the Glory of his Justice, in the *threatning* and *Curse* of the Law, he maketh the Soul see, fixeth and fastneth those Thoughts upon him, that *without shedding of Blood there is no Remission*, Heb. 9. 22. And thereupon, saith God, these and these things thou doest, thou prayest, hearest, mourest, &c. Ay but is thy Mourning, are thy Performances and Attainments the Blood of thy Soul ? If not take them at best, if as perfect as thou couldest wish them to be ; if they be not the Blood of thy Soul, they will not Answer for thy Guilt. These and such like ways God doth oftentimes walk in towards Souls that are inlightned, and have awakenedness of Conscience ; the reason is, God loveth them, and will save them from this ruining Evil of seeking to establish their own righteousness.

Use II. Bring your selves under *Examination*. Consider, are you not seeking to establish your

your own righteousness? The *Jews* were, who yet had a Zeal of God: You may be Zealous for the things you think good, and yet may be Guilty of this Evil, you may be ruined by it, and damned for it, it is a common Evil, a natural Evil, that our Hearts are prone unto, when they come to be under the Power of enlightning and Conviction, they are more prone unto this, than to any gross Sins against the Law of God. I will suggest something whereby you may come to some discerning whether this be the way of your Hearts, that you go about to establish your own righteousness.

1. *Hath God never convinced you of this evil*, never dealt with your Heart by his Spirit in the Word about it? He hath convinced thee of other Sins, but hath he never charged *this* upon thee, hast thou never seen, or felt thy own Spirit prone to *this* evil? If not, I will not positively say, thou art guilty of it, but I will say this is cause of Jealousie. I know God may at first make such *quick* work with the Soul in conversion, as to carry it over this Snare even insensibly; but yet it is that which our Hearts are so prone unto, and that which is so common, that if God have never dealt with us in Particular, about this evil, it is much to be feared we are insnared thereby.

2. That righteousness of your own which you think you have, *what effect bath it upon your Hearts?* It is not with you, it may be, as sometimes it was, you do not live in those Sins or neglects that you did, or it may be some others do: but what impressions do these reflections make? There are two effects of a Mans own righteousness, that do plainly discover he seek-

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eth to establish it. (1.) If it harden thy Haart.
 (2.) If it make thee less sensible of thy need of Christ.

(1.) If thy own righteousness (as it may be called) *harden thy Heart*, restrain and damp the Spirit of mourning. Be it so, your attainments are beyond what others are, or what your own once were, you are got free from such or such corruptions, have attained such and such a constancy in the practice of duties: Ay, but do these attainments dry up the Spring of Godly Sorrow and mourning, is thy Heart under secret straitning thereby as to lamenting thy Sin, and as to bewailing thy former ways, are the remainders of Corruption that are still found in thee light and little in thine Eye? and because you have some Holiness, some Abilities, therefore your defects and short comings are slighted by you? this is a certain evidence that you are establishing your own righteousness; you live upon what you have, or think you have, because what you have straiteneth your Hearts as to mourning and Godly Sorrow.

Again, (2.) *Hath the righteousness you have attained, made you feel less your need of Christ?* When you were compassed about with convictions of Sin, then you felt your selves full of affecting thoughts of your need of Christ; but it is otherwise with you now: you are rid of such corruptions, free from such temptations, come to such attainments in the waies of God, and what then? thou canst stand upon thy own Legs, live of thy self, and art weary of going out of thy self unto Christ for his fullness, and to his righteousness as *that* which you would stand in for acceptance with God:

BUT

But *that* self-righteousness which hindereth the evangelicalness of the frame of a Mans Heart, it is certain the Soul doth establish as his own righteousness.

3. *Canst thou live in any Sin and make light of it, live in it, and by thy own righteousness charm thy Conscience, and keep it quiet that it doth not tear thy Soul in pieces? Canst thou trust in thy own beauty and commit iniquity?* The Prophet joineth them both together *Ezek. 16. 15.* I mean plainly thus, it may be thy Heart is dead, cold, unstedfast with God, thou seeest manifold Distempers within, and yet canst make light of these things, they are not afflictive and wounding; but what is it that relieveth thee that these things do not strike cold upon thy Heart? Here it is, you *have a name to live*, you make a profession, you enjoy Ordinances, there have been such and such things past between God and you heretofore, you abstain from such and such gross evils, and the like; there is somewhat of self righteousness which is the relief of thy Heart, and is the secret strength of that Distemper which thou slightest. If so be that any thing in thy self be the strength of a Corruption, and the relief of thy Heart under condemnings of Conscience for it, it is certain you are guilty of going about to establish your own righteousness.

Use. 3. Take heed of this Sin. Men may have awakenings of Conscience and Zeal for God, and yet seek to establish a righteousness of their own; They are not blind-hearted Papists, or common loose Protestants only, that do this, it is the Sin of a *professing* Generation. You that have attained much, gone far in spiritual things, you

you that set your Face towards Heaven, and keep Company, and hold Communion with them that shall certainly come thither, *you* are the Persons in danger of seeking to establish your own righteousness, you whose Light is high, whose Practice and Conversation is clean, you that are delivered from the snares and miscarriages which you see others entangled in; it is *you* that are in singular danger here, take heed unto your selves. I will say nothing more of this Evil, but that it will (if persisted in) sink your Souls into Hell, as surely as Murder, Adultery or other Sins; the Wrath of God is kindled against thee for *this* Sin, as much as if thou didst commit gross Sins; Take heed therefore of establishing thy own righteousness, there is not a more wicked way thy Heart can take than this. Besides, it is not only provoking, (as it is in other Persons) but it is a Sin singularly Evil in *thee*: What is thy Profession? Is it to establish thy own righteousness? No you profess to go out of your selves, to submit unto the Righteousness of God, to embrace and live upon the Righteousness of Christ: And it is not only against your Profession, but against your inward Convictions, you have an awakenedness of Conscience, which should have taught thee better; thou hast seen thy Self a Sinner, and hast had Convictions of thy Sin: Well, if thou hast Convictions that thou art a Sinner, thy going about to establish thy own righteousness is a Sin against that Conviction; for if thou art convinced that thou art a Sinner in the least, that Conviction should cut thee off from establishing thy own righteousness, for thou art

convinced that thou hast broken the Law of God, wronged this Infinite Justice and Righteousness of God; surely you have had Convictions that you are *worthy of Death*, have done *that* which in the Judgment of God maketh you so, and you have been convinced that *without Blood there is no Remission of Sin*; thy establishing thy own righteousness then, is a Sin against all your Convictions.

But how should a Soul be preserved from this? I will say but one word for answer, and it is this. Behold the Righteousness of God; and bring thy *own* righteousness unto the Law: get sights of the Righteousness of God in his Law. The Apostle saith that he *through the Law was dead to the Law*, Gal. 2. 19. He was taken off from *establishing* his own Righteousness, and *seeking Righteousness as it were by the works of the Law*: but how came this? It was *by the Law*: I know God maketh use of the Gospel; but the great Ordinance to break this great Idol, is the *Law*; and when God will take and manage it in his own hand, it will do it: Get therefore a sight of the Righteousness of God in the Law, what he there demands and standeth upon, that is perfect Obedience unto the precept, and upon the least failure therein, he demandeth a bearing of the *Curse*, and *full satisfaction* to his Justice: then bring thy righteousness unto the Law; doth it fully answer the precept of God? if not, it can't stand: And if you could for time to come fully answer the precept, that there be no failure, yet what will you do to answer the *Curse*? Is thy righteousness thy Blood, the Blood of thy Soul? If it be not, you must quit it, abandon it, you must

must forsake and forego it for ever. Then never go about to establish thy own righteousness; Christ Jesus is the Righteousness of his People, the Scripture declareth it of him, and with an Emphasis *Jer. 23. 6. Jesus is the Son of God; and this is he who came by Water and by Blood, not by Water only, but by Water and Blood, 1 Joh. 5. 5, 6.* The righteousness in which we that are Sinners can stand, must have both these, *Blood and Water*: Christ came in the Purity of his Nature and in the holiness of his Life; but not by Water only, but by Blood also, a Blood of satisfaction for Sins already committed: now if the righteousness which thou hast, have not both these, a perfect spotlessness in which the all-seeing Eye of a Holy God (according to his Law) can find no impurity and defect; and if it have not moreover Blood, *i. e.* satisfaction for Sin already committed, it is a Righteousness that will never stand before God, the Law of God will condemn and reject it, and thee if thou standest in it.

S E R M O N. III.

R O M A N S. X. 3.

— *have not Submitted themselves unto the
Righteousness of God.*

THE Apostle is discoursing in the following and foregoing Chapter, as well as in this, concerning the stupendious Dispensation of God in casting off the *Jews*; the way and means whereof he telleth them was their own miscarriage, and that in three things; First, They were ignorant of God's *Righteousness*. Secondly, *They went about to establish their own righteousness*. Thirdly, *They submitted not to the Righteousness of God*: I come now to speak a little to the last of these, [not submitting to the Righteousness of God.] By the *Righteousness of God* in this last Clause of the Verse, I conceive is meant *that Righteousness* which the Apostle speaketh of and so stileth, chap. 3. 22. Which is *unto all and upon all that do Believe*: And he calleth it the *Righteousness of God*, because it is eminently the Fruit and Product of the Council and Grace of God, as also because he who is the Original Subject and Worker of it, is Jesus Christ, who is *God by Nature over all blessed for ever*; so that it is the *Righteousness of Christ*, as declared and tendered

dered in the Gospel, that the Apostle chargeth the Jews with not submitting themselves unto.

The Point I observe is this,

That it is incident unto some that have the means of Grace, and a Zeal of God, not to submit themselves unto the Righteousness of God. For so these Jews had, to them were committed the Oracles of God, to them belonged the Adoption and the Covenants and the Glory; and here it's said of them that they had a Zeal of God; yet these Persons he chargeth with this, that they did not submit themselves unto the Righteousness of God: It is implied in what he saith of them, in the former Chapter, ver. 31. 32. *They followed after Righteousness as it were by the Works of the Law; they knew they stood in need of a Righteousness, because they had to do with a Righteous and Holy God; but they did not take the right way, they sought it as it were by the Works of the Law, and did not submit unto the Righteousness of God.* The Apostle giveth an account, how it was with himself, that he had been a very sad instance of this, there were things that were once gain unto him, Phil. 3. 7. Such gain as he made account to Live upon, he did then Live or Build his Hopes upon them, fetched his Comfort from them: But what were these things? The Righteousness of God? No, he setteth the Righteousness of God in expresse Opposition to them, ver. 9. *Yea, I count all things but loss and Dung that I may be found in him, not having my own Righteousness which is of the Law, but the Righteousness of Christ.* Our Lord Jesus tho' he called for and pressed Righteousness, and opened the exactness and Breadth of the Law of God, yet he doth likewise blame Men for this

not submitting themselves unto the Righteousness of God; he speaketh in a Parable to them that *trusted in themselves*, and thought they were Righteous, *Luke 18. 9.* They did not go out of themselves for Righteousness, but thought to acquire and Work it out themselves, and he there telleth of a *Pharisee* going up to the Temple standing and strutting there, not submitting himself unto the Righteousness of God, but standing upon his own Righteousness, *God I thank thee I am not as other Men*, thus and thus I do, and am. In the 15 chapter of *Luke*, ye have the same thing held out, by the Parable of the *Prodigal*, who when he had spent his Portion, and came to be in want, what course doth he take? Doth he return to his Fathers House? No, *he joineth himself to a Rich Citizen*, and would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat: Any way rather then submitting unto the Righteousness of God, it is that which our Hearts naturally are least inclined unto, when we are convinced of our own guiltiness and undoneness in our selves.

Three things I would speak unto.

1. Open *what this Righteousness of God is*, which the Apostle taxeth them with not submitting themselves unto.
2. Shew you what this *not submitting* unto the Righteousness of God is.
3. *Whence it is that Men fall into this evil* of not submitting unto the Righteousness of God, even they that have the means of Grace and some awakenedness of Conscience, and Zeal for God.

First, *What is this Righteousness of God?*

is nothing else but the Righteousness of Jesus Christ as a Surety and Saviour for Sinners, which is revealed and tendered in the Gospel, and is upon us unto the Justification of Life, in a way of believing. Three things I would note concerning it.

1. It is the Righteousness of *Jesus Christ*, it *His*, he is the original *Subject* of it: It is plain, the Apostle here meaneth this Righteousness of Christ under this name [this Righteousness of God] by the words that follow, *Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that doth believe*; What the Law calleth for and doth require of Men, this faith he, is attained and acquired in Jesus Christ, it is attained in Christ by all that believe, they have in *him* a Righteousness that answers the demands of the Law, for he is said to be the *end of the Law for Righteousness*: It is I say the Righteousness of Jesus Christ, he is stiled *the Lord our Righteousness*, Jer. 23. 6. And this Righteousness is called the Righteousness of Christ, *David* stileth it so under the Old Testament *Psal. 71. 16. I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only*; it is Christ's because brought in by him, it is an Expression used *Dan. 9. 24. The Messiah the Prince shall bring in everlasting Righteousness*, bring it in, 'tis an allusion to the manner of the High Priest, and the Ordinances concerning him, he was to take the Bloodshed at the Altar, without the Temple, before the Door of it, and he was to carry it in upon the Day of Atonement, into the Holy of Holies: It is an allusion to that, and what that did Shadow out, Christ did really perform; that is, he did accomplish a righteousness, and tender it

up and offer it unto God : The Holy of Holies, was a Type and Shadow of the Presence of God, thither Christ brought it, there he did tender up his Righteousness.

This Righteousness of Christ, is his Righteousness as a *Saviour*, as a *Surety*, whereby I would exclude from it, the Righteousness of Christ both as *Prophet* and as *King*, and his Righteousness that is essential to him as *God* : For tho' it is true we are to submit unto those Righteousnesses of his, yet it is not those which the Apostle hath his Eye upon; but it is his Righteousness as a Saviour, and Redeemer, which he did work out in *our stead* and *for us*. It doth lie in the compleat conformity of Christ to the Moral Law as our *Surety* thereby answering all the demands of the Justice of God by Vertue of it, in behalf of Sinners, in order unto our eternal Salvation and Life. I call it his *full* conformity to the Moral Law, because it is inclusive both of his *Active* and *Passive* Obedience, both his Subjection to the *Curse*, and his Obedience to the *precept* of the Law; and the Foundation and Ground of it is, his being our *Surety*; being so, he is under an Obligation to pay our Debt. We owe a double Debt unto God; as guilty we owe *Satisfaction* to his *Justice* in bearing the *Curse*; and as we are Rational Creatures, and appointed unto Eternal Life, we owe a Debt of *Obedience* : Christ as our *Surety* payed *all* our Debt, and came under an Obligation so to do. Hence he did submit himself unto the Curse of Law; I mention this first before fulfilling of the precept, tho' they were in the performance of them conjunct, but I mention this first, because there is no room for Merit,

Merit, till there be satisfaction, till Arears be clear, till old Scores be paid, for there is no laying down a Price for Future good till Satisfaction be made for what is past; the Satisfaction is in the first place in order of Nature. Now Christ's Satisfaction is that which doth result from his being Subject unto the *Curse*, he satisfied by bearing the *Penalty* of the Law, the *Chastisement of our Peace* is said to be upon him, *Isa.* 53. 5. *and with his stripes we are healed*, that suffering by which we are brought into a State of Peace with God, this was laid upon Christ; the Scripture telleth us expressely that *he suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God.* 1 Pet. 1. 21. 24. Chap. 3. 18.

Christ is said to be *made a Curse for us*, Gal. 3. 13. and said to be *made Sin for us tho' he knew no Sin*, 2 Cor. 5. 21. But that is not all the Debt which we owe unto God, to make amends for the wrong we have done him, and *restore that which we took away*; this was done by Christ, *Psal.* 69. 4. *I restored that which I took not away*: But there must be a *fulfilling of the Precept*. And I reckon Satisfaction first, because it is the immutable Statute of an immutable God, that he will Glorifie his *Justice*, as well as his *Grace*, in saving them he bringeth to Heaven, it must be an Act of *Righteousness* in God, as well as of *Grace* and *Mercy* to bring unto Glory any of the Sons of Men. We owe a Debt of Obedience unto God in order unto Eternal Life: As we are rational Creatures, we are under a natural Obligation to obey the Will of God, and fulfil the Precept in all things to the utmost exactness and strictness of it; this Christ doth also, he bringeth in this Peice of Righteousness also:

also: *Rom. 5. 16. 18, 19.* You read of *many* being made Righteous by the Obedience of *one*, as they were made Sinners by the Disobedience of *one*; the Apostle doth not say by his *sufferings*, but by his *Obedience*, and he setteth the Parallel against *Adams* Disobedience, and that was a Violation of the *Precept*. The Obedience of Christ was a fulfilling of the *Precept*. Christ saith *it becometh us*, even him, *to fulfil all Righteousness*, *Mat. 3. 15.* That is the first thing, I would note concerning this Righteousness of God, it is the Righteousness which lieth in Christ's full Conformity unto the Moral Law, the Demands of the Justice of God by Vertue of it, and that in our stead.

2. *This Righteousness of God* (which it is incident to Men not to Submit unto) *is revealed and tendered in the Gospel.* The Righteousness of God, if you take it for the holiness of his Nature, the Severity of his Justice, it is revealed elsewhere, *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. Rom. 1. 18.* but this Righteousness of God which I am speaking of is revealed in the Gospel; *I am not ashamed* (saith the Apostle) *of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the Power of God unto Salvation; for therein is the Righteousness of God revealed from Faith to Faith, Rom. 1. 16. 17.* The demands of Gods Justice from us, both as we are *rational*, and as we are *transgressing* Creatures, are discovered and made known in the *Law*; for *Moses describeth the Righteousness which is of the Law, That the Man which doeth those things shall Live by them*: As the Apostle hath it, *Rom. 10. 5.* But now the Righteousness of Christ is revealed only in the Gospel; for it is *there*, and there

there *only*, that he is made known, and made known as a Saviour and Surety ; the Apostle therefore addeth, when he telleth what the Righteousness of the *Law* is, he telleth us (*ver. 6. and onwards*) what the Righteousness of *Faith* is, thus saith he, the Scripture speaketh, *if thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart, that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved* : This is *Believing unto Righteousness*. It is the Gospel, and the Gospel only, that telleth us of a *Surety* who was under an Obligation to pay our Debt ; and it doth withal declare, that this Grace of God appeareth only in the Gospel, *Tit. 2, 4, 5, 6. The Kindness and Love of God our Saviour towards Man appeared ; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his Mercy he saved us—through Jesus Christ our Saviour*. The Law requireth *personal Obedience and Satisfaction* ; but it is the Gospel only, that telleth us of a *Surety*, substituted by God, and brought in under an Obligation to satisfy what his Justice required on our behalf : That is one reason why he is called *the Surety of the New Covenant*. *Heb. 7. 22.* you Read of no such thing, as a Surety for Sinners, but only in the *New Covenant*. This Righteousness of Christ which is *revealed* in the Gospel, is there also *tendered* ; for what the Gospel doth display it doth offer ; what it doth reveal it doth tender : This is the difference, between the Condition of the Sons of *Men*, and the Condition of *fallen Angels* ; the Angels hear indeed of a Righteousness brought in by Christ, but there is no tender, no offer of this made unto them ; they hear in the preaching of the

Word

Word of the Gospel, that there is a Righteousness for the Sons of Men, but hear of none for themselves; thence the Gospel is commanded to be preached unto Men, *Go ye into all the World and Preach the Gospel to every Creature*, saith Christ to the Apostles, *Mark* 16. 15. Every Creature *under Heaven*, is the Apostles Expression, *Col.* 1. 23. But tho' the Expression seem to be so unlimited, yet only the *Sons of Men* are to have it. *Matthew* explaineth it so, *Go teach all Nations*, chap. 28. 19. [all Nations,] You may take it in the Words of Christ, under the Name of *Wisdom*, *Pro.* 8. 4. *Unto you O Men I call, and my Voice is—* to whom? Unto the *Sons of Men*; to them Christ speaketh in the discovery and tender of this Righteousness which he hath brought in, he tendereth it to be received, to be closed with, to be believed on, to be submitted unto by *Men*. The Blood of Christ is part of this Righteousness, it is Satisfaction to Justice in bearing the Curse, and the Apostle telleth us expressly, it is the Object of Faith, *Rom.* 3. 25. Christ is set forth as a Propitiation, *through Faith in his Blood*. It is the Righteousness of Christ which is tendered, with a Command to believe; and that Command is backed and bound on with a threatening on the one Hand, *he that believeth not shall be damned*, and a promise on the other Hand, *he that believeth shall be saved*.

3. *This Righteousness of Christ*, thus revealed and tendered in the Gospel, is made ours in the way of a free gracious *Gift* thereof, and a full *imputation* unto us, as also in the way of *believing*. In which given righteousness, imputed to us, and received by faith, we stand before God for

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Eternal Life. I say we stand in it before God, God *giveth* it to us, hence you read of the gift of righteousness *Rom. 5. 17. they which receive abundance of Grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall Reign in Life,* so several times in that Chapter, ye have the same Expression, the free Gift, the Gift of Righteousness. This righteousness is made *ours*; you must not imagine, that it is so transferred from Christ to us, as that he is not the Subject of it; that is impossible; but it is so transferred from Christ to us, as that it is really *ours*, we have it; so the Apostle, *having not my own Righteousness, but that which is of God, by Faith; Phil. 3. 9.* We have it, it is given to us, And our having this righteousness is also often expressed by *Imputation*: You have it Ten times over, *Rom. 4.* And this Imputation is not a mistake, but a real and legal *Grant*, and making over the Righteousness of Christ unto us, and accepting us in it: Even as there was an Imputation of *Adams Sin*, which is so reckoned to us, as that which is legally ours, and we are constituted Sinners thereby, *Rom. 5. Many were made Sinners, by the Disobedience of one,* there is a reality and Efficacy in the Transferring of *Adams Sin* down unto us, we are made Sinners: Now such a like reality there is in transferring down the Righteousness of Christ unto us, we are *made righteous*; nay the Holy Ghost hath a more emphatical Expression, *we are made the Righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. 5. 21.* He who knew no Sin *was made Sin*, that we might be *made*, or become *the Righteousness of God in him*; it is so efficaciously and so really done in a Law Sense as that the Apostle stick-
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eth not to say, we are made the Righteousness of God in him. And in 1 Cor. 1. 30. Christ is said to be made unto us, Wisdom and Righteousness; we are of God in Christ (saith the Apostle) who of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness, &c.

This Righteousness of Christ is made ours upon believing; It is ours in a way of Gracious Imputation unto our justification of Life, (it is the Apostles Expression, Rom. 5. 18.) but it is upon us in a way of believing; hence we are said to be justified by Faith, Rom. 5. 1. Gal. 2. 16. And on this account the Apostle saith that this Righteousness is unto all, and upon all, without difference, who do believe, Rom. 3. 22. And it is a Righteousness which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith, Phil. 3. 9. Not but that we have the benefit and effects of this Righteousness before our believing, for we have Faith by Vertue of it, Faith is given to us or wrought in us, by Vertue of this Righteousness of Christ, Phil. 1. 29. It is given unto you to believe, and not only so, but to suffer for Christs sake, but it is given on the behalf of Christ, And in 2 Pet. 1. 1. you find how precious Faith is obtained, tis through the Righteousness of God and our Saviour; it is obtained; that is, communicated, given out as by Lot or Portion, as the Word used there signifies; how is it given? Its through the Righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus: But it is upon us unto our Justification of Life in a way of believing.

Secondly, What is this not submitting unto the Righteousness of God, which is incident even unto them that have a Zeal of God? Not submitting

ting themselves faith the Apostle, it is a negative, which is best discerned by an Affirmative; What is *submitting* unto the Righteousness of God? It is the same with that which is called *receiving*, *Rom. 5. 11. 17.* it is a Work of the Heart, it is that which is so commonly called *believing*, with the Heart Man *believeth unto Righteousness*, *Rom. 10. 10. If thou believest with all thine Heart*, *Acts 8. 37.* The Heart is the main Seat and Subject of Faith. Now the *submitting* unto the Righteousness of Christ, is nothing but *receiving* it, that is *believing*: And you know what believing on Christ and on the Righteousness of Christ is; it is plainly, *when a Soul seeing its own need of Christ and his Righteousness, yieldeth up it self to stand therein, according unto the Gospel*; it is when a Soul draweth in all its desires, hope and dependance unto, and bottometh and buildeth them upon this Righteousness of Christ; when the expectations and workings of the Heart within it self before God about Salvation, are upon this Righteousness: This is submitting our selves unto it: The Gospel saith and declareth, that if a Sinner would stand before God with Acceptance, it must be in this *Righteousness*; now when the Heart closeth with this Word, and giveth assent and consent unto it for it self; when the Heart doth thus close with this Word, and is real therein; this is a submitting it self unto it: It includeth a *renunciation*, and an abandoning of *all other Righteousness*, wherein to stand before God for Justification: It implieth that a Man taketh his Hand off from all other Righteousness, letteth go all other Hopes, yieldeth himself lost and gone, as
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to any righteousness of his own to stand in before God ; but the desires and dependances of his Soul are all drawn in, and united unto, and upon this Righteousness of Christ.

It is called submitting unto this Righteousness of God, for *Reasons* good and just. One is this, because it is an Eminent instance of that Obedience, and Subjection, which we yield unto God : God commandeth and requireth it, now when our Hearts comply with this command of God, we *submit* our selves unto him therein ; that is one Reason why it is called submitting our selves, because it is our Obedience to the command of God ; the Gospel is published at the *command of the everlasting God*, Rom. 16. 26. And this Gospel doth not only declare and tender, but we are commanded to yield up our selves unto this Righteousness of God ; there is an Authority of God that doth take hold of and oblige Conscience: Now when a Person doth in a way of Obedience yield himself unto a command that obligeth Conscience, it may well be called a Submission, for there is a Supremacy and Authority in the Command.

Another Reason why it is called Submission is this ; it is from *Pride* of Heart, that Men do not believe: If Men do not receive this Righteousness, and submit unto it, the bottom of the business is *Pride*, Job. 5. 44. *How can ye believe that receive honour one of another*, saith Christ, for if the Heart be set upon Honour and Praise that cometh from Men, it is a thing inconsistent with believing. It is true ye have other pretences and excuses for your not believing, and not submitting : Many Souls that
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stand off from Christ and his Righteousness by their Unbelief, they think that of all things it is not Pride of Heart that maketh them do so ; but yet it is so in truth, and so it will be found one Day, and so you your selves will Judge when your own Hearts shall condemn you for Unbelief. Examine those Objections upon which Men refuse this Righteousness, and do not depend upon Christ and venture their Souls upon him ; They are all from Pride. *I would believe, saith one, but I am unworthy to be accepted, unworthy of an Interest in Christ and his Righteousness : This is plain Pride, you would be worthy before you receive it. It is horrible Pride that such a Thought should rule and reign in the Heart of a sinful Self-condemned Sinner. I would believe, saith another, but I am not humbled enough, broken hearted enough : It is true, there must be a broken Heart where there is believing ; yet it is nevertheless true, that for you to stand off, and justify your selves in Unbelief, because you are not humbled enough, is horrible Pride ; for it seemeth, if you had humbledness enough, as you imagine, you would go unto Christ with it, and tender it unto him, and exchange it for his Righteousness ; this is horrible Pride. Another refuseth to receive this Righteousness of Christ, because of the Greatness of his Sin and Guilt ; I have been so grievous a Sinner, my Guilt so amazing and overwhelming, that it maketh me that I dare not receive, and rest upon this Righteousness. It seemeth if thy Sins were fewer and thy Guilt less, you would then go with Confidence unto Christ ; this is plainly Pride. The like I might shew in every Allegation upon which*

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Men

Men refuse the Righteousness of Christ: Whatever it is that shutteth up the Heart from receiving Christ, it is somewhat of Pride that is the Root of it. And therefore believing is well and justly called *submitting* our selves unto the Righteousness of Christ; the Grace of Faith is a *humbling* Grace; for those that believe go out of themselves as *empty, worthless, nothing* Creatures unto Christ for all.

Thirdly, I should come unto a Third thing, i. e. *Whence is it that Men fall into this Evil?* Or, How cometh it to be incident even to such as have the means of Grace and a Zeal for God, not to submit unto the Righteousness of God?

In general here is the reason of it; Men are born under another Covenant, even a Covenant of Works, and not a Covenant of Grace: Now as a Man's Covenant is, so is the inclination and frame of his Heart; a Mans Covenant influenceth his Spirit and his way: Now a Covenant that revealeth and telleth nothing of Christ and his Righteousness, is that which Men are all born under, and they are *shut up* in Unbelief, under a Covenant that curseth them, unto a non-submission unto and rebellion of Heart against Christ. But that would be too long to go through now, therefore I shall only speak a Word or two for

APPLICATION.

If this be incident to them that have a Zeal of God, *let it be an awakening, and a warning unto you*: Take heed unto your selves, that it be not *your* Sin and Snare; it was a fatal ruining Sin unto the *Jews*, they were cast off upon it; take

take heed it be not your Sin as well as theirs : There are none more deeply condemned before God, then they that have the Gospel preached unto them. Others are not so guilty, because this Righteousness was never tendered unto them. Take some Considerations to set on this warning.

1. Not submitting your selves unto the Righteousness of God, *is a Sin which is greatly provoking.* It is true, it is a Sin of Omission, not submitting, so it is expressed, tho' there are positive workings of the Corruption of the Heart in it : But be it a Sin of Omission, yet such Sins will damn Men in the Day of Judgment ; as Christ speaks, *Mat. 25. 42, 43. Ye did not do so and so, it is Omission, for which they are arraigned :* How much more will it be said at the great Day, *you believed not, submitted not your selves unto my Righteousness ;* tho' it be an Omission or Neglect, yet it is such an one as is a *refusal*, and it is a refusal that is *provoking* unto God, *Luke 14.* Christ speaketh a Parable, the King had made a Feast, and sent to invite unto it, and *they all with one Mouth began to make excuse, ver. 18.* The Word there, is the same with that in, *Heb. 12. 25. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh ;* it is indeed a refusing upon allegations, some pretences, some colourable Causes as they imagine, but tho' they had their allegations upon which they thought to be excused, what saith the Text, *ver. 24 ?* The King was angry and passed a dreadful Sentence, *none of those Men, saith he, which were bidden, shall taste of my Supper.* You may possibly lie out from this Righteousness of Christ, refusing it upon some allegations and excuses, as you

think, that will justify your so doing, but whatever the excuse is, this is certain, it will be taken for a refusal, and it will be a provocation unto Christ, the King will be angry: It is a Sin that is coupled, by the Wisdom of the Holy Ghost, with other heinous Sins, *Rev. 21. 8.* Such and such *shall have their part in the Lake of Fire*; Who are these? Such as submit not unto the Righteousness of Christ; they are said to be the first, to lead the Van; *the unbelieving and fearful* are there yoked and bound up in the same Chain for Eternal Damnation, with all manner of open Sinners. Give me leave to say, how strange soever it may seem, yet it is a certain Truth, thou mayest as well commit Idolatry, Murder, Adultery, as be an Unbeliever; for unbelief is as certainly damning as any of them.

2. *It is a Sin which leaveth and bindeth all a Mans other Sins upon him, and binds him down under the guilt of them.* He that believeth not, is condemned already, *Joh. 3. 18. 36.* His unbelief leaveth him in a State of Condemnation; it is a condemning Sin upon this account among others, because if a man live and die not in Unbelief, no sin shall condemn him; and on the other hand, if a man live in this Sin of *not submitting unto the righteousness of Christ*, tho his other Sins be but little, yet he must go down to Hell, tho they be never so small. The truth is, this is the great Sealing-Sin; look, as in a way of believing, Men are sealed by the Spirit of Promise unto the Day of Redemption; *Ep. 1. 13. & 4. 30.* so men by persisting in their Unbelief, and not submitting to the Righteousness of Christ, are sealed up unto the Day of Damnation; Go make the Heart of
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this People fat (saith God, Isa. 6. 10.) and their Ears heavy, and shut their Eyes: This is dismal sealing-work; but how is this done? It is by the preaching of the Gospel, wherein this Righteousness of Christ is set forth before Men, and Men are called upon to submit unto it. The Gospel is a *savour of Life unto Life*, unto them that believe; but to them that believe not, that submit not unto this Righteousness of Christ, it is a *savour of Death unto Death*, 2 Cor. 2. 16. Men were dead before by nature; but the rejected, refused Gospel striketh them through with a second and a double Death.

3. Not submitting unto the Righteousness of Christ, is a Sin that bringeth sure Destruction. God can better bear with other sorts of Sinners, than with them that live in Unbelief; he can bear long with some flagitious wicked Men, tho' they go to Hell at last; he can better bear with them, than with those whose Hearts stand out against the Righteousness of God. Hence God maketh quicker dispatches with Mens Souls for this Sin, than for other Sins: And altho' he doth not always cut them off by Death, yet he hath other ways to express his anger against them; sometimes he taketh away his Spirit, in those common workings of it which they had, and shutteth them up under hardness of Heart; sometimes he leaveth them to Self-delusions; and these spiritual Judgments are commonly the Fruit and Effect of *this* Sin, the neglect of submission, or non-submission to the Righteousness of Christ, which is a piece of Pride and Rebellion, yea, God looketh upon it so, and upon thee for it,

as a *stout-hearted Rebel*, because far off from this *Righteousness*, *Isa. 46. 12.* There is much of the *Glory of Gods Holiness and Wisdom* shineth out in his Law, and therefore for Men to disobey his Law, is a *Contempt of God*: But his *Wisdom, and Grace, and Holiness* shine forth in the highest lustre, in this *Righteousness of Christ's* being brought in for us, and tendered unto us; and for us not to submit unto this, it is the highest contempt and affront, one of them, that we can put upon God, it cometh near unto the unpardonable Sin; for indeed the unpardonable Sin is the most malicious and invenomed Rejection of, or not submitting unto the *Righteousness of Christ*.

You should therefore always think with your selves, when you are under the tenders of the *Righteousness of Christ*, it is a critical Hour, God is making trial of you, in order unto his after-proceedings; if your Hearts open, yield and submit unto the *Righteousness of Christ*, then happy you, but if you stand it out, you know not what the sad Issue may be; you would think you should greatly provoke God, if you did imbrue your Hands in Blood, (and so you would) but you do that which is no less provoking, if you do not submit unto this *Righteousness of Christ*, tendered unto you by the Gospel.

S E R.

S E R M O N. IV.

R O M A N S X. 3.

—have not Submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God.

I Come to a Third thing, *i. e.* Whence it is that this Sin of Non-submission to the Righteousness of God is incident to them that have both the means of Grace and some awakenedness of Conscience and Zeal of God.

In General, the most comprehensive reason of this Evil is, *because Men are born and brought forth into the World under another Covenant, which speaks nothing of this Righteousness of God, or submitting to it: Now the way of Mens Hearts is according to the Covenant they are under.* You may observe that as a standing rule, for the discovery and trial of your State, and the way of your Hearts in their walking and dealing with God; it is according to the Covenant which you are under: If Men be under the Covenant of *Works*, the way of their Hearts in dealing with God is according to that Covenant; if under the Covenant of *Grace*, the way of their Hearts in dealing with God is according to that Covenant, *Jer. 31. 31.* saith God, *I will make a New Covenant with them, and what then? It follows, ver. 33. I will write my*

Law upon their Hearts ; even that Covenant which I make with them, I will write upon their Hearts. It is always so ; according to the Covenant Persons are under, such Impressions are made upon their Spirits, the Spirit is melted down and moulded into that Covenant ; and thence the dealing of God with a Man, is according to the Covenant under which he standeth : And therefore by the way and frame of a Mans Heart he may come to know the Covenant under which he is : The Apostle saith, Rom. 6. 14. Sin shall not have Dominion over you ; what Assurance doth he give them of that ? For, saith he, ye are not under the Law, but under Grace ; Sin shall not have Dominion over you, the ruling Principle of your Hearts shall not be Sin, but that which is contrary, even Love to God ; and he confirmeth it and assureth it unto them by this, ye are not under the Law, but under Grace ; your State and Covenant is such as doth infallibly infer, that the ruling Principle of your Soul is not Sin but Grace. While Men are under the Covenant of Works, it being to them a broken Covenant, and they under the curse of it, all that it doth produce, and all that is in Men that are under it, is Sin, all the imaginations of the Thoughts of the Hearts are Evil, only Evil, and that continually, Gen. 6. 5. But all these sinful Motions are produced by the Covenant under which Men are ; Rom. 7. 5. When we were in the Flesh, the Motions of Sins which were by the Law did work in our Members to bring forth Fruit unto Death ; When we were in the Flesh, that is, in our natural State, under our natural Covenant as broken, the Motions
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of Sins did work in our Members to bring forth Fruit unto Death ; this was by the *Law*, as the Apostle saith, by the Virtue and in the Strength of the Law of God. So that this is an everlasting Rule, and a certain Principle ; *As a Mans Covenant is, so is the way of his Heart in his dealing with God.* Men therefore being born under another Covenant, it is the way of their Hearts in applying unto God, *not to submit unto this Righteousness of God* ; because the Covenant under which they are born is silent about it : It is not only *silent* about it, but it is a thing quite *above* it, and contrary to the expresse way of that Covenant, to submit a Mans self unto this Righteousness of God ; there is no notice at all of this Righteousness of God, or the Duty of submitting to it in the Covenant of Works, no such thing made mention of it ; there was nothing of it written in the Heart of Man, there are no Intimations of it in the Works of Creation or Providence, nothing at all is to be read about it in them.

There are these things in *this submitting our selves* unto this Righteousness of God, which there is nothing at all spoken of in the Covenant of Works :

1. That a *Sinner* should be *Righteous*.
2. That a *Man* should be Righteous by the Righteousness of him who is God.
3. That the Righteousness of him who is God should be upon a Sinner *in a way of believing*.
1. That a *Sinner* should be *Righteous*. This is new, the Covenant of Works never spake a Word of it, it spoke indeed of a Man's being Righteous,

Righteous, but it was only an *innocent sinless* Man; but it brought in no righteousness to one that was once made unrighteous. Men and Angels might be Righteous, but it was by keeping in it, by standing; if once they broke the Covenant in the Precept of it, and fell under Guilt, there was no Provision intimated in that Covenant for their ever being Righteous again; This work of making a *Sinner* Righteous, it ceaseth for ever, according to the Letter of that Covenant.

2. In this submitting our selves to the Righteousness of God there is a second thing, which is as sublime a Mystery as the former, that is, *That this Righteousness should be brought in, and wrought out by him who is God.* Some Notion Men may have from the Light of Nature and Reason, of the Imputation to them of that which is done by another; but still it is with this Provision, and upon this Foundation and bottom, that there be an alliance between them, that they be some way *One*: Now how he who is God should be made One with us poor Creatures, this is a sublime Mystery, the discovery whereof is peculiar to the Covenant of Grace. All Mankind were *One* with the first *Adam*, One in Nature, One as issuing from him, he was the Root of them all. Hence that his Sin should be imputed unto us, there is some Light let into the Understanding of Man about it; but how a Sinner should be One with him who is the Son of God, God by Nature *over all blessed for ever*, this is a Mystery peculiar to the Covenant of Grace, and is revealed only there.

3. That

3. That the Righteousness of this Person Jesus Christ, *should be made ours in a way of believing*, made ours by Free-gift and legal Imputation in the way of believing; this is another new and Mysterious thing. That Adam's sin should be made ours in a way of natural Generation, is agreeable to the Light of Nature and the Principles of Reason; but that the Righteousness of the Son of God should be made ours by Free-gift and legal Imputation in a way of believing, this is one of the Counsels of God, which only Christ from Heaven did discover. Mens Reason and natural Thoughts would work quite another way. If there be such a thing as Righteousness brought in, and the Question be, How shall this be made ours? The Answer would be, we must do some great thing, undergo some great matter for the obtaining of it: But the Counsel of God is quite otherwise, He stands upon nothing to be either done or suffered by us; all that he requires is this, that we should *Believe*, that is, that we should receive and rest upon it. He doth freely give it to us, reckon it unto us in a way of believing; *it is unto all and upon all them that believe without difference.*

That is the most general and Comprehensive account of this not submitting unto the Righteousness of God: It is because Men are born under another Covenant which says nothing of it, nay, which is contrary to it; for that Covenant requires a Man should stand in his own righteousness, requires him not to submit to the Righteousness of another, not to look out of himself to another for Righteousness;

That

That requires no such thing, yea, it was contrary to the Strain and Tenour of that Covenant; *That* obliged him to live in himself, upon his *own* Obedience, to present this unto God, as *that* wherein he must stand: But now the Covenant of Grace requiring Men to submit to the Righteousness of God, doth require them to forego, abandon, take their Hands off from a righteousness of their *own*, to despair of any in themselves, and to look to *another* for it.

But there are more *particular* Causes of this Sin, [not submitting to the Righteousness of God.] I will mention Four:

1. Ignorance of Gods Righteousness.
2. Prejudices against this Righteousness of God, and this way of submitting to it.
3. Pride.
4. A mistaken Faith, or else a Conceit of being interested in this Righteousness of Christ some other way than by believing.

1. There is *Ignorance of Gods Righteousness*. The Apostle mentions it in the first Clause of the Text, *they being ignorant of Gods Righteousness*, they have not realizing sights of the Holiness of that God with whom they have to do, and before whom they must shortly stand for their everlasting Doom; Millions come into the World and pass through it without any awakened Thoughts as to this matter, never consider with themselves what they shall stand in before God, *wherewith they shall appear before the most high God*, Mic. 6. 6. And of those who have some awakenings about it, and some sad and serious Thoughts and Considerations wherewith they must appear before God,

God, there are many that fall short of knowing the Righteousness of God with whom they have to do : Hence it is that Men take up with such a righteousness to stand in before God as will never serve their turn, Reforming their Lives, leaving their Sins, labouring after some conformity unto the will of God ; such kind of Fig-leaves do Men cover themselves with, in order to their standing before God ; And why is all this ? It is because they are ignorant how Just, Jealous, Holy and Severe that God is with whom they have to do. Hence it cometh to pass, that it is so common for Men to take up with their own amendments and performances as their righteousness and to patch up their defects by their repenting and asking forgiveness, but the Righteousness, of Christ is not in all this. This is from Ignorance of God's Righteousness. God's Righteousness is such as that it will have a full answer unto all the demands of the Moral Law in the behalf of Sinners, hence it will have full Satisfaction for the Violation of it, it will have suffering and Satisfaction unto the demands of it ; but low and mean Thoughts of God's Righteousness maketh Men take up with that which is short of answering what it doth insist upon.

2. *There are Prejudices that mens hearts are full of against this Righteousness of God, and submitting to it.* Men are forestalled with prejudice, prepossess'd, their minds and hearts are seized upon by it. There are some prejudices which are common and natural unto Men in general, but there are some which in the unsearchable Providence of God fall upon such and such Particular Persons.

1 There

1. There are some common and *general* Prejudices. The *Socinians* and *Papists* stumble at that as a *Stumbling-Stone*, that *our Sins* should be charged upon *Christ*, and that *his Righteousness* should be transferred unto us; this is a *Stumbling-stone*, and a *Rock of Offence*: Hence they deride and blaspheme that blessed *Foundation* of a *Christians Hope* and *Faith*. Again, it is a *Stumbling-Block* at which many *Stumble*, that *Men* should be saved by a *poor Man* who lived an *afflicted Life*, and died an *accursed Death*, was at last hanged, and crucified without the *Walls of Jerusalem*; they look upon this as an *incredible foolish Thing*. A *Heather* other ways *Wise* and *Moral*, and who seemeth to have had some *Light* about it, some *Notion* of it, in the *pride* and *prejudice* of his *Heart*, cried out, *it is a mad and foolish thing for any man to hope for his own Salvation by the Death of another*. Men are forestalled with *prejudice*, *prepossessed* by it; The *Apostle* telleth us, that to the *learned Grecians*, the *preaching of Christ* was *foolishness*; and to the *Jews* a *stumbling Block*. Furthermore, unto *Mens* reason it is an *astonishing*, *unaccountable* thing, that *God* should put his *own Son* in our place, and should wrap our *Sins* about him, and when he had thus put the *Sins* of *Sinners* upon him, should then *awaken his Sword* against the *Man* that was his fellow, *Zech. 13. 7.* as against a *Sinner*; these things are *astonishing* and *unaccountable* unto *natural Reason*, Men are *prejudiced* against them, they think it *impossible* that He who was *God* should undergo such things. But besides these common prejudices against the very *Righteousness* of *God*, there are also common prejudices against the

way of submitting our selves unto it; Our submission unto it, doth imply an utter abandoning, foregoing and renouncing of our *own* righteousness; Now, how are Men prejudiced against this, that all they have attained to, and all they do, shall never go for any thing, shall be utterly nothing in the matter of Justification, and the acceptance of their persons with God, and their being translated unto life? Yea, those that have a Zeal of God, are apt to have such prejudices fill their Hearts; when they have layed out a great deal of pains and care, and had many a weary thought about this matter, to arrive at such and such attainments, and when all is done, they must own themselves *unprofitable Servants*, yea, own their best Raiment as *filthy Rags*. This Mens Hearts are prepossessed against.

2. As there are these common and *general* prejudices, so there are in the holy and unsearchable Providence of God *particular* prejudices laid, at which Men stumble: Thus it was with the *Jews*, *Christ crucified was a stumbling Block to them*. How came this? They had taken up other Notions concerning the *Messiah*, that he must be a Prince, a Potentate, and must live in a great deal of Splendor; and when Christ came they saw no such thing. Again, God so ordered it in his Providence, as that the Preachers and Publishers of the Righteousness of Christ, who called upon them to submit themselves unto it, they did withal call upon them to forsake *Moses* and all his Rites; these must be laid aside and buried as *useless things*, as appointments wherein God would now no more communicate himself unto

to them: Yea, God in his Providence ordered it so, as that together with their submitting themselves unto the Righteousness of Christ, they must not only forsake *Moses* his Ordinances and the *Levitical* pompous Worship, but must receive the *Gentiles* as Members and Fellow-Citizens with themselves, and Members of the same Body. They had an invincible prejudice against these things, *Acts* 22. *Paul* is making an apology for himself, and they hear him with Patience, till he saith, *Depart, I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles*, v. 21. Presently upon this, their prejudice was so far enraged, that they behaved themselves like Beasts against the Apostle; they could hear of Christ and his Sufferings, but would not hear of *that*, that the *Gentiles* should be taken in, and ingrafted into the same stock with themselves.

It is so at this Day; it is a Providence, but it is an awful and Tremendous one, they that Preach the Righteousness of Christ, and press Men to submit themselves unto it, yea that are most Earnest in urging this, they do withal call upon Men and tell them, they must come off from their own forms and ways of Worship, must lay aside their *old* superstitious notions about the Church and its Government: These things are prejudices, that Mens hearts are possessed withal; they could be glad to receive the Righteousness of Christ, but then they must let go their old, beloved, and darling ways and forms of Worship. Yea, God hath ordered it in his Providence so, as that there are other Stumbling-Blocks laid in the way of many, as to their submitting themselves to this Righteousness

ness of God, They that are the Dispensers of the Word, that are, it may be, most earnest in calling Men to submit unto the Righteousness of God, they shall have, as the Apostle speaks, *Temptations in the Flesh*, there shall be manifest failings, weaknesses, and manifest mistakes appearing in them; and those mistakes, errors or weaknesses Men stumble at, and on the account thereof, refuse and reject their Message, and the Righteousness of God which is preached and displayed by them. That's a second thing.

3. There is the *pride of Mens Hearts*. Man, since the fall, is a proud Creature by Nature, is loth to own his own Misery and Wretchedness; But if Convictions thereof do prevail and take place upon him, then his Pride makes him very desirous to be somewhat in the business of his own Salvation, he would fain have some hand in it, to put the Crown upon his own Head, at least in part: Now from this Pride it is, that Men submit not themselves unto the Righteousness of God, the expression of the Apostle is [submitting themselves] to shew that the Work of believing is a humbling Work, it emptieth the Soul, and maketh it nothing in its self, this is that which Pride is against, Pride would be somewhat, and Pride hinders the Heart from coming down and stooping unto the Righteousness of God, *how can ye believe* says Christ, *John 5. 44. who receive and seek Honour one of another?* If a Mans Heart be set upon Honour, that somewhat he would be in the matter of his own Salvation, it will be impossible that he should believe, he cannot believe when his Heart is set upon

Honour: But I have spoken something of that before.

4. There is a mistaken and false persuasion that Men have an interest in this Righteousness of Christ when they have not. This makes them not submit to the Righteousness of Christ: Who will be perswaded to labour after that which he conceiteth he hath already? it is common for Men to conceit they have an interest in the Righteousness of Christ, when indeed they are far from it. There are mistakes rife and common in the World, as to the very proper Notion of it: Some think the Righteousness of Christ is wrought out for all; Others conceit this Righteousness of Christ is upon all that make a profession, that are not *Infidels* and *Pagans*, that own Christ by Name: This is the plain English and Bottom-principle of these conceits of blinded deluded Creatures; they think in their Hearts, they are Christians, *Protestants*, and of the Right Belief: So are all the Devils in Hell as well as you, they believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith as well as you. Others delude themselves into a self-deceiving conceit that they are interested in the Righteousness of Christ some other way than by Faith; instead of submitting themselves unto it, instead of Faith, they substitute some external Priviledges; as Baptism, Admission unto Church-fellowship and the like: as if these things did make the Righteousness of Christ to be upon them, whereas the Apostle saith it is quite otherwise, it is upon them, and only them, and all them that believe. Some mistake their own spiritual attainments for the way whereby the Righteousness of

God

God is upon them, they Pray, Reform, Mourn, Repent, Cry unto God for Pardon, and therefore they conclude this Righteousness of God is upon them: it is the very delusion that Christ pointeth at, *Luke 13. 26. Many shall say unto me at that day we have eaten and drunk at thy Table, and Math. 7. 22. We have cast out Devils and prophesied in thy name;* and yet they were looked upon by him as workers of iniquity, and so indeed they were. There are *Doctrinal* mistakes in the very Notion of Faith; and there are more *Practical* and Heart mistakes in the exercise of it; if Men mistake either way, either take that to be beleiving which is not, or that to be in themselves which is not there, they never come to submit to the Righteousness of God.

Thus I have shewed some of the Roots or Springs of Mens not submitting themselves to the Righteousness of God. *Note,* Two things concerning them.

1. *That in them all the Devil hath a great hand.* When Men submit not themselves unto the Righteousness of God, whatever the cause, the immediate Root and Spring of it be, the Devil hath a great hand in it, he doth work inwardly and effectually in the Children of disobedience, the Children of unbelief, it is the same word; the God of this World blindeth the minds of them which believe not, *2 Cor. 4. 4.* If Men do not believe, the God of this World hath blinded their minds, the Devil hath a hand in it, he laboureth with all his power and artifice to keep Men from submitting themselves unto this Righteousness of Christ: the reason is because he knoweth that if he can but make Men mis-

carry here, he hath them sure enough, and fast enough; this he doth also out of Malice to Christ as well as unto Souls, for he knoweth that this submitting to his Righteousness giveth Honour unto Christ, setteth the Crown upon his Head, which if Men refuse to do, they put a contempt and indignity upon him.

2. *Note This, That God himself hath a Holy, but a very High and Sovereign Hand in Mens not submitting themselves unto the Righteousness of Christ.* There is the Curse and Wrath of God in it; which Curse is upon all Men in common, we are all of us by Nature under the Curse, *Gal. 3. 13. Eph. 2. 3.* now this Curse cutteth us off, pusheth us away from God, and as long as that taketh place upon us, it is impossible we should submit our selves unto the Righteousness of God: In submitting our selves unto this Righteousness we turn unto God, close in with God in that new Revelation and Discovery that he maketh of himself in the Gospel: But it is the Venom of the Curse of God that is fallen upon us all in our natural Condition, that it shutteth us out and pusheth us away from God; there is therefore a common Curse and general Wrath of God that is upon Men naturally: But besides that general Curse and Wrath of God, there is a special, a particular Curse upon Men sometimes which hath a hand in this miscarriage, *Rom. 11. 32. God hath concluded them all in unbelief,* he hath locked them up fast, as it were in unbelief; when Men have lived long under the Gospel, and the tenders of this Righteousness of God, and have shut up their Hearts against those offers of it; after a while it cometh to that

that pass with them, that God turneth the Key (as I may say) of his revenging Wrath and Justice upon them, and locketh them up in the Dungeon of unbelief, maketh their Sin become their Punishment, their Choice become their Plague; they would not submit themselves to this Righteousness; and God in righteous retribution saith, they shall never submit themselves to it. Thus *Mens eyes are made blind, and their ears heavy, their Hearts fat and hard,* and this by the very Gospel it self, so ran *Isaiahs* Commission, chap. 6. 9, 10. a place that is oftener cited in the *new Testament* than any other; which may intimate this to us, that under the *new Testament* dispensation of the Gospel there is much of that Work done upon the Hearts of Men, blinding and hardning Work, much of that dreadful Work to make their Hearts heavy; Men come to be locked up in unbelief by the very Gospel, it proveth a *Savour of Death unto Death unto some*; altho' it is of Life unto Life, unto others upon whom it doth prevail, to make them submit unto the Righteousness of God; yet when Men have lain out in that way of Sin beyond the time God will bear with them, it becometh a *Savour of Death unto Death*; they were Slain by the Curse of the first Covenant, but are killed over again, and doubly Slain by the Wrath and Vengeance of God for Contempt of the Gospel.

APPLICATIO N.

Use 1. This may shew you the Reason why the Gospel meeteth with such ill Entertainment in the World: It is incident unto Men naturally not to submit unto the Righteousness of God; now that which the Gospel calleth for and urgeth

is this, *Submit your selves unto God's Righteousness.* You know how it is with Men if you press and urge them unto a thing they are deeply and desperately averse unto; what do you do but exasperate them? It is the ready way to draw out their anger: Truly so it is here, the Gospel presseth and urgeth Men to that which their Hearts are desperately against, Mens Hearts like not this, there is a deep averfeness in Men unto it, that is the Reason the Gospel meets with so ill Entertainment, so little success, and prevaieth so little; it is difficult dealing with a Heart prepossessed, thus it is with all Mens Hearts naturally, and there would never any one be overcome by the preaching of the Gospel, if the Lord did not put his Hand unto the Work, and reveal his own mighty Arm.

But that is not all the Reason why the Gospel prevails no more; another Reason is, it is undermined and perverted, Men Curtail the Gospel, substitute another Gospel in the place of the Gospel of Christ; and this also comes to pass because the true Gospel of Christ calleth Men to submit unto the Righteousness of God, and Mens Hearts are unwilling and averse to this; hence they turn themselves to a thousand Contrivances to substitute another Gospel, and will have another Righteousness for Justification, a righteousness of their own, a *subordinate* righteousness as they call it, a righteousness of their own wherein to stand before God. Hence also it is that Men frame false Notions and Descriptions of Faith, the *Socinians* will have it to be such an *assent* to the word of the Gospel as bringeth the Heart unto

a Resolution to obey Christ as its King, and yield up it self to be ruled by him: a rotten Notion of Faith, the Nature and genius of Faith lyeth in *receiving*; but they in the room thereof substitute *Obedience*; In stead of receiving from Christ, their Faith, as justifying, rendereth Obedience unto Christ; yea the Gospel is not only undermined but it is openly opposed, and there are none of the great Points of the Gospel but are opposed and that very openly; this is the Reason of it, Mens Hearts are averse from submitting themselves unto the Righteousness of God.

Use .2 Then enquire into your selves. It is incident unto Men not to submit themselves unto the Righteousness of God, yea to them that have means of Grace, a Zeal for God, and some awakenings of Conscience; look unto your selves, you may be the Persons guilty of such a fatal and ruining thing; you have Hearts that naturally will rather let you do any thing then submit to this Righteousness of God: there is no Sin but the Devil and your own Hearts will let you part with it, rather than submit unto the Righteousness of God; there is no Duty you are so averse unto but they will let you take up the Practice of it rather than submit to this: Yea, your Hearts will more easily part with your Estates and Lives, than submit unto this Righteousness of Christ, *it is an easier thing to be a Martyr than to be a Believer.* Moreover, there is nothing wherein our Hearts are apt to play more treacherous Pranks, nothing they are more apt to deceive us in, than in this; it is easier to find out our Hearts deceits in most other matters, they are

not so apt to counterfeit or at least it is not so easie counterfeiting in other things as in this. These things should awaken us to be very Serious, and to go down deep into our own Hearts, to find out and clear unto our own Consciences, *whether we do indeed submit unto the Righteousness of God or no?* But you will ask how may that be discerned and known? The Scripture furnisheth the Man of God, the Christian, for every good Work, and for this most directly; there are several infallible tokens of submitting, or non-submitting unto the Righteousness of God; which we may speak to afterwards.

S E R.

SERMON V.

ROMANS X. 3.

—have not Submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God.

THE Doctrine which I observed from these Words, you may remember was to this purpose, *That it is incident unto them that have the means of Grace, and some awakenedness of Conscience and Zeal of God; yet not to submit themselves unto the Righteousness of Christ.*

Some Application was made: I entred upon a Second Use, namely, to call upon us to enquire whether we are not guilty of this Evil, of not submitting our selves unto the Righteousness of God. It is a matter of great concernment to be clear in this. If we have not submitted our selves unto the Righteousness of Christ, it concerns us to be convinced of it; and the Spirit of God will bring us unto that before he hath done with us, if we belong to the Election of Grace; for He convinceth the Elect of Sin, *because they believe not on Christ, John 16. 9.* And if we have submitted unto the Righteousness of God, it concerns us to know it and

to be clear in it; We may then have a Testimony from our own Consciences, and that according to the Word of God; *that we are passed from Death to Life*, and that this Righteousness of Christ, is unto us, and upon us, for our Justification unto Life; for the Word of God is positive in it, *that it is unto all, and upon all without difference, who do believe, Rom. 3. 22.* And how desirable an attainment and blessing is that, for a guilty Self-condemned Creature to be able to see himself standing in, and clothed with the Righteousness of the Son of God. The truth is, there is no *Peace and Assurance* of Conscience without it, not only without submitting unto this Righteousness of God, but no Assurance without *knowing* it. As long as you are in doubt, and in the dark about it, whether there be Faith of the Operation of God wrought in your Soul or no, you must needs be answerably in doubt, and in the dark about your spiritual Estate: Besides, we are *commanded* to use Diligence and endeavours about this thing, *2 Pet. 1. 10. Give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure.* Neither Calling nor Election can ever be made sure, unless we be clear in this, that we have submitted unto the Righteousness of God; Our Calling indeed lies there. Moreover, We have the more reason to be inquisitive into our selves, and our Estate, *because*, tho' it be possible, yet it is *difficult* to attain a clearness of Satisfaction concerning it; It is in this, as it is in any other Grace or Work of the Spirit on the Soul; there are imitations and counterfeits, things that look like it, and are not it: And in Particular, as to this of submitting

mitting unto the Righteousness of God, there is the more reason to use Diligence in inquiring into our selves concerning it, because our Hearts are so Averse from it; Men will much more easily be brought to any thing than this, they will leave off Sin, reform their Lives, take up a Practise of Duty, and a Profession of the Name of God, do any thing, nay our Hearts will rather yield to Suffering, than to submitting unto the Righteousness of God: It is easier to *give all our Goods unto the Poor, yea, our Bodies to be burned,* than to give up our Souls to stand in the Righteousness of God; for there is a more deep and desperate averfeness in our Hearts from *this*, than there is from other Duties: Other Duties we may make our Righteousness, while we are doing them, we may Establish our own Righteousness, and *that* our Hearts are prone enough unto; but when we submit unto the Righteousness of God, we abandon and forego all our own Righteousness, all our hopes in and adherence of Heart unto it, all that we are, all that we have attained unto, and done, all that we ever hope to attain unto, and to do, 'tis all abandoned, and goes for nothing in our submitting our selves unto the Righteousness of God. Submitting our selves to Gods Righteousness includeth in it, that all our Attainments, all our Performances, whether Present or Future, shall go for nothing, We will reckon them as Cyphers, as nothing, in the business of our Justification, and Acceptance of our Persons by God unto Eternal Life. Now our Hearts being so averse to this thing, they are apt to deceive us. There is a great deal
of

difference between having the Conscience convinced, that thus it *must* be, that we must submit unto the Righteousness of God, and having our Hearts brought *really* unto it : There is a Notion of it common, and general among us, yea, and it may be, our Consciences may make Application of that general Truth to our selves in Particular, so far as to tell us, that it is our Concernment and Duty; as where is the Conscience that will startle, or make any Question, whether it be not his Duty to submit himself unto the Righteousness of God : But tho' Conscience be convinced of it, yet to have the Heart brought under the *Power* of those things, and moulded accordingly in our Application unto and dealing with God, is quite another matter. *Examine* your selves then, Whether each of *you* have submitted unto this Righteousness of God ? If you ask how it may be known ? To give some light therein, I will put a few other Questions ; and I would put them unto your *Consciences*. And oh that *every* one would look upon them, as put unto them this Day by *God*, and see what Answer your Consciences can make unto them !

1. *What influence upon your Spirits hath that good, which you sometimes think and seem to have attained, or to have wrought in you ?* You have strength against some corruptions, some ability to some Duties, some good things in you as you think sometimes, some fear of God, some love unto God, it is not with your hearts as sometimes it was. Now whenever you are able to make such comfortable reflections, what effect have these good things which you think are

are wrought in you, which seem to your selves to be desirable things, what effect have they upon your hearts? This will discover whether you submit unto the Righteousness of God or no, if you follow on the Enquiry. It is a certain truth, that *a Soul that hath submitted unto the Righteousness of Christ indeed, the more fruits of grace it discerneth in it self, the more and more entire the heart is in submitting it self unto that Righteousness of Christ*: But on the other hand, when a Soul discerneth somewhat that it taketh for good in it self, if it sits loose from Christ, feels less need of Him, and secret disesteem of Christ groweth up in him, it is a shrewd sign *that Soul hath not submitted unto the Righteousness of Christ*. Do but consider the frame of the Apostle *Paul*, *Phil. 3. 8*. He did, not only at first conversion, when first convinced that he had nothing but formality, outside and Hypocrisie in him, and was under the fresh awakenings of the guilt of imbruing his hands in the blood of Saints, He did not only *then* count all things loss for the Knowledge of Christ; but even afterwards, after he had been a believer, been sanctified, had done and suffered much for Christ, laboured more abundantly; yet even then saith he, *I do count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ*. This was the frame of his heart when his attainments in holiness and grace were eminent and high; yea the higher the Souls attainments are, the more earnest and perfect their hearts are in depending upon Christ, and trusting entirely unto him. It is the

the wretched guile of some Spirits, when they are under impressions of guilt, when they fall into some sins, or some former guiltiness is revived and charged afresh upon them, Oh *then* Christ is precious, and they can gladly submit unto his Righteousness; but when that guilt is out of sight, and when they have in their view something they have done for God, some attainments of their own, some performances of their own, their hearts grow cold unto Christ, they are negligent and remiss in applying unto him, they are weary of submitting themselves to the Righteousness of Christ. This is a wretched frame, and a pregnant evidence that *that* Soul hath never submitted in truth unto this Righteousness of Christ; if thou hadst done it once, it would be abiding in the frame of thy heart, the hand of the Spirit of Christ would hold thy heart still towards him in a way of believing.

2. *Consider what love unto Christ, and liking of this way of Salvation by standing in his Righteousness there is in your Souls.* Do your hearts apply to it and submit your selves unto it by constraint and force? to submit with a repining and grudging heart, with a secret murmuring within, that this is thy duty and the only way, thinking that God deals hardly with thee because he hath made such a Constitution, that Men must submit unto the Righteousness of Christ or find no acceptance with him; this is far from what should be, and argueth thy heart doth not submit aright. True submitting thy self unto the Righteousness of Christ would so far reconcile thy Soul in the love and likeing of it, unto this counsel of God,

as that you would do it with thankfulness, and admiring and adoring that grace that hath consulted this way for the saving of Sinners. 2 Sam. 23. 5. says *David*, *tho' my House be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an Everlasting Covenant well ordered in all things and sure, and that* (saith he) *is all my Salvation and all my desire*; the word there rendred *desire* signifieth also delight, so it is rendred in the first Psalm, *His delight is in the Law of the Lord*: that which is held out in it is this, that the rejoicing and liking of *David's* Soul was in and unto the Covenant of Grace, *all* his desire was there, *all* his liking and delight was there. If God had said unto *David* take thy choice now, whether to stand in a righteousness of thy own, and to be saved in some other way than in this way revealed and held out in the Covenant of Grace, *David's* heart would readily have answered that *all* his desire was unto the Covenant of Grace: the Spirit of faith that bringeth the Soul to submit it self unto the Righteousness of God, doth so melt down the Soul into that way of Salvation revealed in the Gospel, that it is moulded thereinto. As the Spirit of Sanctification and Holiness maketh the Soul not only to dread Sin and to avoid it, because it is ashamed of it, because it smells of Fire and Brimstone, as it is a damning thing; but the Spirit of Holiness makes the Soul to hate and loath Sin and all the workings and Motions of it, all the appearings and offers of Sin, the heart riseth with an abhorrency of them; Even so it is with the Spirit of Faith in the Soul; *that* doth not only make the Soul come off from its unbelief, and

and not submitting unto the Righteousness of Christ, out of *fear and dread*, because it must do so or be damned; but it maketh it come off from its Unbelief, to submit to the Righteousness of Christ *willingly*, with a *gladness* of Heart; it comes off from the workings of Unbelief not only with a dread of them, but with a loathing and detestation of them, O these workings of Unbelief are Vile hateful things, the Soul abhors them; thence it comes to pass, that among all the workings of Corruption in the Heart (and sometimes there are many hideous workings) there are none more abasing than the workings of Unbelief.

3. *Is your submitting your selves unto the Righteousness of God accompanied with brokenness of Heart, yea, hath it a Tendency and Influence to soften and melt the Heart?* There is a kind of submitting unto the Righteousness of God, such as it is, which hardens the Heart, and maketh Sin sit light, that makes the Soul to bear it without any humbling, wounding Sense of it; but this is far from a right Submission unto the Righteousness of God, it is but a Counterfeit thereof, that doth thus stupify the Heart: Right submitting to the Righteousness of God, doth break up a Spring of Godly sorrow in the Soul, it melteth and thaweth the Heart, and makes it mourn within it self, in a more kindly deep and ingenuous manner over its own guiltiness, than ever it could do before. You have an Instance of it, *Luke 7. 37, 38.* There is a pardoned Sinner, a Woman that was a Sinner, but in a pardoned State, therefore she had looked and submitted her self unto the Righteousness of Christ,

Christ, she was in a pardoned State, so Christ assureth her, *thy Sins are forgiven*, but how doth this Work? She clothes and stands behind Christ at his Feet, and washeth them with Tears, and wipeth them with the Hair of her Head, she expresseth the deepest Sense of her own vileness and guiltiness, with her loathing and Detestation of her self for her Sin, Ezek. 16. 61, 63. *Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed, and Confounded, and never open thy Mouth any more, when I am pacified towards thee.* You know it is again and again the Promise of the Covenant of Grace, Ezek. 36. 31. *You shall loath your selves in your own sight for your Iniquities, and for your Abominations.* And Ezek. 6. 9. *They that escape shall loath themselves for the Evils which they have committed.* Zech. 12. 10. *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced; Ay when they are under the Influence and Efficacy of the Spirit of Grace, then they shall look on him whom they have pierced; and what Impression doth this make upon their Hearts? They shall mourn bitterly, as a Man for his first born.*

4. Doth this Righteousness of Christ which you have submitted your selves unto, yield such sweetness and Satisfaction unto your Heart, as that it is out of taste for all other sweets? The Soul that looks unto the Righteousness of Christ, and hath submitted it self unto it, saith within its self, *herein I have enough*; and hence its Affections and Appetite to other things come to be deadned and mortified, Gal. 6. 14. The Apostle saith, *that through the Cross of Christ, he was Crucified to the World, and the World to him.* He looked upon the Cross of Christ, whereby

Christ wrought out, and brought in a complete and perfect Righteousness, what effect had this? It made him dead unto the World, and the World to him; He was dead unto the World, had no living Affections unto the enjoyments of the World; and the World was dead unto him, it had no Power upon him, no Influence over his Heart to take his Heart and draw it unto it; thus was he dead unto the World by the Cross of Christ. It is what Christ speaks, *John 4. 14.* to the Woman of Samaria, *Whosoever drinketh of the Water which I shall give him shall never thirst.* What is the Water that Christ gives? Among other things that are included in it, this Righteousness of his for our Acceptance and Justification is one principal thing: Now, he that drinks of this, shall never thirst, *i. e.* he shall never thirst with a thirst of total Indigence, and he shall never thirst with such dropie-thirstings after worldly enjoyments, as others do, because this Water yields a Satisfaction, and an everlasting refreshment unto the Soul. In a word, looking unto the Righteousness of Christ, always brings in with it a mortifying of worldly, carnal hungering and thirst. Now then consider, you say you look unto the Righteousness of Christ: Ay, but your Heart is inflamed, your Affections are burning towards the World; it should be a Testimony in your Conscience, that your Heart is false in submitting unto the Righteousness of Christ.

§. You that submit unto the Righteousness of Christ, what do you submit unto it for? You look to it, and close with it, but what is it for?

for? I beseech you, let your Consciences Answer that Question, what would you have? what is it that you seek in this way? I doubt some of your Hearts may be at a dismal stand upon this Question being put: But give me leave to put it again; what is it for, that you submit your selves to the Righteousness of Christ, what is it you seek thereby? It may be you will be ready to say, what should we have in our Eye, and upon our Hearts in submitting our selves unto this Righteousness? Well, give me leave nevertheless to knock at the Door of your Hearts, what is it you would have? Consider and call over your former Thoughts, and the usual workings of your Hearts: possibly some may say, we would escape *the Wrath to come*, be delivered from Hell, gain go to Heaven, and stand before God in it at the Day of Judgment. And is it so indeed, and is that *all* thou would'st have, is there *nothing else* that thou would'st have, nothing else designed or desired or sought, by submitting unto this Righteousness of God? Then thy Heart deceiveth thee here, thou doest it not in Truth. *A Generation of Vipers may so far take warning, as to go about to flee from the Wrath to come, Mat 3. 7.* And if that be *all* that is upon thy Heart, and *all* that thou would'st have, thou would'st escape the Wrath to come, and be saved from Hell at the great Day, if this be *all*; thou hast neither Lot nor Portion in this matter: For I would demand, how do you think to stand before God *now*, and be brought into Fellowship and Communion with him *now*? Doest thou think to do *this*, to attain *this*, upon thy

own account, or in any other way than in this Righteousness of Christ; or is thy Heart careless, neglectful, and indifferent about enjoying and holding Communion with God at present? He that submitteth unto the Righteousness of Christ aright, looks to it for Justification now, and to be brought into nearness with God now, as well as for Salvation at the great Day. So the Apostle, Gal. 2. 16. *We who are Jews by nature, and not Sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a Man is not justified by the Works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed that we might be justified.* Justification is a Work of God, that passeth upon us now, we are therein translated from Death unto Life, 'tis a change of State now, not to be done at the great Day, when we come to the Judgment-seat of God; but it is a change of State that passeth upon us now. And saith the Apostle, we have believed that we might be justified, They had looked unto the Righteousness of Christ to stand in it then, and at that present to have their States changed thereby. The Soul that hath never been sensible of its distance and separation from God, of the breach between God and it, the woful alienation from the blessed God that it was under; that Soul certainly, hath never rightly submitted unto the Righteousness of God. But the Soul that only looks to the Righteousness of Christ to stand in it at the great Day to escape Hell, that Soul which hath never seen, never been made sensible of, never felt the present breach between God and it, its being broken off from God, and its alienation that now is between it, and God in this

this Life; that Soul which can live well enough without God *here*, provided he may escape Hell hereafter, *that* Soul hath never submitted to this Righteousness. The Soul that looks only for Salvation at Death, and at the Day of Judgment, and only for *that* looketh to the Righteousness of Christ; but can live well enough *without* God in the World, can bear alienation from God, and workings of Heart against him, and feeleth them not, lamenteth them not, hath never mourned over its distance from God, its want of Communion with God, this Soul hath never submitted rightly unto the Righteousness of Christ.

6. *Can thy Heart be satisfied without him whose Righteousness this is, without Union to him, without Influences from him.* You count it (and that justly) a sign of an Adulterous Person, if a Wife should like the Estate or Honour of her Husband, but cares not for his *Person*: It is so with some Men, they like, they love the pardon of sin and Justification, they like and love the Benefits flowing from Christ, but as for the *Person* of Christ himself, Union to him, and standing in him, this they can be content well enough without, they have no Love, no Esteem for that. In short, if *only* the Benefits of Christ be precious unto you, and glorious in your Eyes, but in the Person of Christ, you see no Beauty, no Excellency or surpassing Glory, it is certain you never submitted yourselves aright unto the Righteousness of Christ: For no Soul committeth its self aright unto Christ's *Righteousness*, that doth not see an Excellency and Glory in Christ's *Person*. Hence it is made a Character and Description of Be-
 most of holiness is that which no man can lieve

lievers, to see a Glory, and Beauty, and Excellency in Christ, John 1. 14. we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.

By such things as these, you may come to discern whether you have submitted unto the Righteousness of God or no. That is all I will say on this second Use. There is another Use or two, in which I will be brief.

3. In the next place, Labour with your own Hearts about this, to submit your selves to the Righteousness of Christ. Not to do this is a miscarriage, a Soul ruining miscarriage which we are incident unto; therefore take heed of it, and Labour earnestly with your own Hearts to bring them to submit unto the Righteousness of God. Consider to this purpose these things.

(1.) What it is that is set before you: It is a Righteousness; and is not that the very thing you need? You have to do with a Righteous God, and you are guilty in your selves, it is Guilt that hath undone you; what should be more taking with the Hearts of guilty Sinners than Righteousness? It is Righteousness that is set before you. We do not now call upon you to submit unto the Authority or Law of God, tho' that is your duty, a duty that takes hold on Conscience, you are bound unto it, under Pain of Damnation; but it is Righteousness that you have lost, and that you stand in absolute need of, and must have, or miscarry Eternally; its this we call upon you to accept and submit your selves unto.

(2.) With reference unto this Righteousness, Consider what it is that is called for from you.

you. God doth not say, go Work it out, bear my Wrath, make Satisfaction by suffering Ages or Millions of Years; tho' if he had put that upon us, if at the end of it there might have been any hope of Deliverance and Acceptance with him, we should have been inexcusable, if we had slighted it: If he had said keep all my Law for time to come, Sin not in Thought, Word or deed, and this shall be your Righteousness; it would have been our Duty to yield up our selves unto this Command: But this is not the way of God. He hath laid *that* upon another, even upon Jesus Christ; Christ brought in this Righteousness for us, it is He who hath wrought it out, *that* which he requireth of us is to *receive* it, and that as held out as a *Free-gift*, Rom. 5. 15. &c. There is a Righteousness brought in by Christ and offered to us, and that which is required of us is our receiving it; God doth not say work it out, but *submit* your selves unto it, that is the Phrase in the Text, and that very Phrase implieth that if you do not do so, God will look upon thee, and deal with thee as a *Stout-hearted Rebel*; for the thing which thou breakest with God upon, is this; God saith *submit*, and thou refusest to do it; God saith submit unto the Righteousness which Christ brought in, but thy Proud Heart will not submit unto it.

(3.) Consider who it is that calleth upon you, to submit your selves unto this Righteousness of God. 'Tis he that hath *Sovereign Authority* over you; He whose Command bindeth and taketh hold of Conscience, it is *Christ* that wrought out this Righteousness who doth

also tender it. You mistake the matter, if you think it is only the call of a charitable or compassionate *Man* like your selves ; no, it is the Command of the Blessed Eternal God : we indeed are Messengers, but it is God and Christ who *beseech you by us* to receive this Righteousness, you know the Apostle so speaks, 2 Cor. 5. 20. Whenever this Righteousness is set before you, it is Christ that doth it, Eph. 2. 17. *He, i. e.* Christ, for it is Christ whom that *Relative* referreth unto, *He came and preached Peace* (saith the Apostle) *to you, which were as far off as well as to them that were nigh,* yet Christ was never with them at *Ephesus*, but they were Ministers, Messengers, *Ambassadors from Christ*, who did declare this Righteousness unto the *Ephesians* to be submitted unto, therefore the Apostle doubteth not to say, *Christ came and preached Peace unto them*: When you hear of submitting your selves unto this Righteousness of God, remember that it is *Christ* who requireth it of you.

(4.) Consider how Glorious a Righteousness this is. It must needs be a Glorious Righteousness.

[1.] Because of *Him* who is the worker of it, who is the *Son of God*, *Blessed for ever*; and in that regard it is more Glorious than the Righteousness of Men and Angels, it is more Glorious than the righteousness of *Adam* in Innocency, or the Righteousness of Angels that never sinned ; for it is a Righteousness that answereth fully all the demands of the Law in behalf of us *Sinners* in our fallen Estate. It is true, *Adam* had a Righteousness, and stood in it before he sinned ; and it is true, the Holy Angels

gels have a Righteousness in which they stand: but neither of these do or can Answer the demands of the Law on the behalf of Sinners: If one of the Angels should Sin, the Righteousness that he hath had and stood in Six Thousand Years would be lost and vanish, it would disappear, He would be stripped naked, be a Righteous Creature no longer. An Angels Righteousness, and the Righteousness of *Adam* in his Integrity would serve for one that had never sinned; but when once Sin entered, the Law presently demands Satisfaction of us for Transgression past; which the Righteousness of *Adam* and Angels can never reach unto: but *this* the Righteousness of Jesus Christ doth, it containeth in it *Satisfaction* as well as *Merit*, it containeth in it a bearing of the *Curse*, as well as a fulfilling of the *Precept*.

But, [2.] To see a little further into the Glory of this Righteousness. It is an *unforfeitable* Righteousness, be but interested in it once, and you are Established in it for ever. *Adam* did lose his Righteousness, and Angels would lose theirs, if they should once Sin, it is not so with this Righteousness of Christ, it is *unto*, and *upon all that do believe*, tho' they have *fallen short of the Glory of God* before, yea, tho' they fall short of their Duty to God afterwards; tho' there be Sin abiding in them, many Sins committed by them, yea, how deep soever their falls and backslidings may be, yet this Righteousness will abide upon them still; and that is one Reason why it is called an *Everlasting* Righteousness, *Dan. 9. 24*. And the Apostle says, *it is unto all, and upon all that do believe*; now Believers are Sinners, have Unbelief

Unbellef in them while they believe, and are liable unto after Sins; you know it is so with all Believers, it was so with *Paul*; but yet this Righteousness of God is upon them nevertheless: It is a Righteousness therefore that cannot be forfeited or lost, and in that regard it doth excell and transcend the Righteousness of *Adam* in his Integrity, and that of the Angels in Glory.

[3.] This Righteousness of Christ, it is *that* through which the Love of God floweth out unto those who are interested in it; God loves Believers looking upon them in Christ, and as clothed with his Righteousness, *makes us accepted in the beloved*, *Eph. 1. 6.* But what kind of acceptance is it, what kind of love is it, that God receiveth, embraceth and loveth a Believer with, who stands in this Righteousness of the Son of God? Christ hath two Expressions, *John 17.* to set it forth, *ver. 23.* *Thou hast loved them, even as thou hast loved me.* He designed the same good, *i. e.* the like good, the like Glory and Happiness unto them that he designed unto Christ himself; *that* sheweth the greatness of the love of Election: And in the last Verse of that Chapter he saith, *I have declared unto them thy Name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.* Here's the same love or like Expressions of love: that thou may'st do for *them* and let out thy self unto *them*, as thou doest unto *me*, that the love wherewith thou hast loved *me* may be in *them*. It is through this Righteousness of Christ, that this is brought about, that the love wherewith God hath loved Christ is in Believers, *that*

that shows it is a very Glorious Righteousness, because it is such as that through it, and upon the account of it, this great love wherewith he loved Christ doth flow out unto, and upon Believers to all Eternity.

4. Another Use shall be this, *You that have been delivered from this ruining Evil of not submitting unto the Righteousness of God, do you bless the Name of God.* It is an Evil incident unto them that have the means of Grace, awakenings and Zeal for God; if God have delivered you from it, be you very thankful: It is natural unto you as well as others; your Hearts were as prone, as addicted to Non-submission unto the Righteousness of God as others; it may be you have had Experience of it, it hath been a wounding thing unto you; when you have felt the steely averfeness of your Heart against submitting unto the Righteousness of God: *ay, but the Lord hath won the Day, by those Victorious wrestlings of his own Spirit.* It is not only natural but its general and common; it is the Disease that killeth many; other Sins and Lusts, this and that Sin and Lust *slay their Thousands;* but among them that make Profession, it is this, *of not submitting unto the Righteousness of Christ,* that slayeth its *Ten Thousands.* It is not only natural, common and general, but consider this too, to heighten your thankfulness, it is a *damning* miscarriage. Other things that are hateful unto God, God will pass by and pardon, especially when Sins of Ignorance; yea, strange Distempers and frowardness of Heart in thee will God pass by, but this not submitting unto the Righteousness of Christ, be it out

out of Ignorance or not, if thou hadst gone on and continued guilty of it, the Lord would not have passed it by; it is a Sin which if persisted in would never have been forgiven, it is not so with some other Sins, there may be much of some other Corruption continuing in the Heart of a Child of God, and yet the Lord will own him for his, looking upon him in Christ: But this not submitting unto the Righteousness of Christ, if thou hadst continued in it, it would have barred thee from an Interest in Christ, thou hadst never been United unto him, never hadst stood in Christ, if thou hadst lived under the Power of this Evil.

And let me add also, (and I believe I speak unto some that have cause to subscribe unto it) the ways of God with you to bring you to submit yourselves unto this Righteousness of Christ were extraordinary and singular, he dealt with thy Spirit so, as that it may be, thou dost not know another Sinner under Heaven, that ever was dealt withal at the same rate: Do but look back upon the methods of God with your Souls in order unto this thing, to bring you to stop and yield up your selves unto the Righteousness of God, and you will see much of the Riches of his Grace, the depths, the Glorious depths of his Grace to bring you to it. There is something extraordinary with every one, whom God bringeth and maketh to yield themselves unto the Righteousness of God: Some he brings unto himself in one way, some in another, to some he lets in Light at first, some he tireth out with their own darkness, some

he bringeth by the very Gates of Hell unto Heaven, as it is said of his leading *Israel* through the Wilderness, he caused them to pass through the Wilderness, a Land that no Man passed through; even so it may be said, so it will be said, such Thoughts some of us have cause to have of Gods way with us; He took a way with us which he never took with any, He used such Methods, walked in such a way, took such a Course as we never heard of towards any, the singularness of the way of God with us, should enlarge our thanksgivings to him, that he hath in this Point made a conquest over us, and won the Day.

THE Coherence and Reference from these Words to those that go before, is somewhat differently accounted for by Interpreters. It is plain, by the Third Verse of this Chapter, that many among these Christians had been questioning and censuring the Apostles Authority and Ministry. Seeing a Breach of Unity speaking in him. With an Eye unto those, and that practice of theirs the Apostle uttereth these Words.

Some conceive them uttered by way of appeal to their own Experience, as bidding them remember and reflect upon what Work they had found wrought in them, and among them, that so they might be a Conviction and Evidence of Christs speaking in the Apostle. And most true it is, that the Efficacy of the Word upon the Conscience and Hearts of

SER.

S E R M O N . VI.

2 COR. XII. 5.

Examine your selves, whether ye be in the Faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates?

THE Coherence and Reference from these Words to those that go before, is somewhat differently accounted for by Interpreters. It is plain, by the Third Verse of this Chapter, that many among these *Corinthians* had been questioning and censuring the Apostles Authority and Ministry, *seeking a Proof of Christ speaking in him.* With an Eye unto those, and that practice of theirs, the Apostle uttereth these Words.

Some conceive them uttered by way of *Appeal* to their own Experience, as bidding them remember and reflect upon what Work they had found wrought in them, and among them, that so *this* might be a Conviction and Evidence of Christ's speaking in the Apostle. And most true it is, that the Efficacy of the *Word* upon the Consciences and Hearts of hearers,

hearers, is an undeniable Demonstration of the Authority of that Word, that it is the Word of Christ.

Others conceive these Words spoken by the Apostle, not so much in a way of Appeal unto their Experience, as by way of Reproof and Correction, to call them off from their vain arrogant censoriousness: They were questioning his Apostleship, his Authority and Ministry; but saith the Apostle in these Words, there is another Work that is more proper and more necessary for you to attend and apply your Minds unto: If you will be examining, examine not me so much, for a Proof of Christs speaking in me, as your selves; examine your selves, prove your selves. And it is not unlike, but the Apostle doth the rather call them to this, and set them about this Work of *examining themselves*, because it is too frequent among Professors where there is a Variety of Ministers and People, where there are some dangerous and damnable Errors, and where scandals have been rise in breaking out, and where there are also Differences and Divisions among themselves, to have this Work of Tryal and Self-examination exceedingly forgotten and neglected; and to have a Spirit among them ready for censuring one another, censuring others, and especially the Ministers of Christ.

I see no reason, but we may well conceive the Apostle had his Eye upon both these things in these Words: They do both agree with the Words themselves; and certain it is, that the Holy Ghost (by whom the Apostle was moved in writing this Verse) hath in many Passages

Passages of Scripture a manifold, vast, and comprehensive way; and so he might well have in these Words. The Parts of them are two.

1. An Exhortation: *Examine your selves whether ye be in the Faith, prove your selves.*

2. A Motive with which that Exhortation is pressed: *Know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except you be Rebroadcast?* In the Exhortation, I will take notice of Three Things.

1. The Duty it self exhorted to: And that is *Examining our selves*, examine your selves, prove your selves. And hence we have this.

First Observation, That Self-examination is a Duty enjoined by God upon Christians.

2. We have in the Exhortation, the manner how this Duty is to be attended and applied unto: And this is couched partly in the proper *Pregnancy* and Signification of the Words of the Apostle, and partly in the redoubling of them. He contenteth not himself to say *Examine your selves*; but he cometh over with it again, *prove your own selves*. The first Word, which we render *Examine*, is taken from the Practice of those that pierce Vessels, to try and taste what Liquor is in them: And it implieth such an Examination as is with relish, an Examination by Tryal, by sight, by taste. And the other Word which we render here, *Prove*, is elsewhere rendered *Examine*, 1 Cor. 11. 28. It properly signifieth such an Examination, as brings matters to a Resolution; it is not only proving, but proving in order to a Judgment, such as brings it to an Issue, that there is a Determinate

nate Judgment made concerning the thing of which a Proof is taken : Hence the Word sometimes signifies to *prove* and try, sometimes it signifies to *approve* upon proving. Hence we have a

Second Observation, *That this Duty of Self-examination which Christians are to Practise, they ought to be Earnest in it, they ought to make thorough Work of it, never lay it down, never give it over, until they be able to make a clear and peremptory Judgment, and that with Confidence and Assurance in themselves, as to that about which they examine themselves.*

3. We have the *Object* about which this self Examination is to be Conversant. And that is, *whether ye be in the Faith?* Examine your selves (saith the Apostle) *whether ye be in the Faith.* It is much to the same Scope with what you have in the following part of the Verse, *whether Christ be in you.* It meaneth their Spiritual State, whether they have in their Hearts the *Faith of Gods Elect*, the Faith of the Operation of God? But the Apostle thus expresseth it, *whether ye be in the Faith*, because Faith when it is wrought in the Heart, doth become the *ruling Principle*, and beareth sway. We say a Man is *in* a Passion, or *in* Drink, when he is overcome by them, when these things become predominant : So it is where there is any thing of true Faith, it is the ruling Principle, a Man is acted and carried by it ; both in his whole walk, and more eminently in his dealing with God. We find the Holy Ghost speaking of our being *in the Flesh*, Rom. 7. 5. *When we were in the Flesh*, and Rom. 8. 8. *They that are in the Flesh.* And sometimes he

I

speaks

speaks of our being in Unbelief, 1 Tim. i. 13. *I did it ignorantly in Unbelief.* Sometimes you Read of the whole World lying in Wickedness, 1 John. 5. 19. This form of Expression is used by the Holy Ghost, to import and signifie the Power that the Flesh, that Unbelief, that wickedness hath over Men, when they are therein. In like manner being in the Faith, implieth that Faith is in us; and not only so, but that it is in us as a ruling Principle. And hence you have a

Third Observation, *That one special thing which Christians should examine themselves about, and make thorough Work of is this, Whether they be in the Faith or no?* There are other matters indeed that fall under a Christians Self-examination, but this is one great thing, one special thing that should come under his enquiry, *Whether he be in the Faith or no?*

The Motive with which the Apostle presseth the Exhortation, is in the following part of the Verse; *know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates.* The Words are in their Sense and form, a connex Proposition, as if they were thus expressed; If ye be not Reprobates, ye do know your selves, that Christ is in you:

Know ye not your selves? *your selves* is the Accusative Case: Therefore the sense and meaning is, that *themselves* were the Objects of their Knowledge; not only were the Agents in it, and the Subjects of it; but themselves were the Objects, were the Things known, by which they came to know that Christ was in them; *know ye not your own selves.*

That

That *Christ is in you* ; By this Expression the Apostle meaneth their *saving Union* unto Christ: Now that Union which is between Christ and a Believer you know is *Mutual* ; and thence sometimes it is expressed by *Christ's* being in us, so it is here in the Text, that *Christ is in you* ; and Rom. 8. 10. *If Christ be in you* ; Again Col. 1. 27. *Christ in you the Hope of Glory*. Sometimes it is called *our* being in Christ, Rom. 8. 1. *There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. 16. 7. *Who were in Christ before me*. Sometimes ye have both of them laid down and expressed together, John 14. 20. *You in me, and I in you* : One inferreth the other, they are closely conjoynd and always go together : Our being in Christ is more directly and properly expressive of our *Covenant State* : Christ's being in us, is more directly and properly expressive of our Relation to him, as he is the *Root and Spring of Sanctification and Life*.

Except ye be Reprobates : A startling Word, that which hath justly startled the Conscience of many a one, even of many a Believer. But by *Reprobates* here, the Apostle doth not mean a Persons being a *Non-elect*, or the Object of the Decree of *Reprobation* ; there is no Token of that, save only the Sin for which there is no Remedy : But by *Reprobates* here, he meaneth their being *disallowed, disapproved*, and that of God : He meaneth that there is somewhat much amiss in them, somewhat on the account whereof they were blame-worthy, somewhat that was Sin and shame to them. The Word here rendred *Reprobates*, signifieth properly *unapproved, or disallowed* :

In that sense the Apostle useth it with relation to himself, 1 Cor. 9. 27. *I keep under my Body, &c. Lest I my self should be a cast away*: So we render it: The meaning is, lest I my Self should be *disfallowed* of God, be *disapproved* by him. He doth not mean lest he should be a *Reprobate*, as we usually Understand that Word, he had no fears of that, he had a fullness of Assurance in himself that he was an *Elect Vessel, chosen* of God *unto Salvation*: And the Apostle knew that no one could in time, by any miscarriage of his own, fall under the Decree of Reprobation; for as it was from Eternity, so it is fixed and unalterable, no one becomes a Reprobate in that Sense, that was not so before all Worlds: *Lest I should become a cast away*; that is, lest I should be disapproved, disfallowed of God. So here, *except ye be Reprobates*, except ye be disapproved, disfallowed of God. And the Apostle in the Original hath an allaying and mitigating Expression, which our Translation takes no Notice of, he means unless you be *in somewhat* unallowed, unless there be *somewhat* in you, that is to be disapproved, and is to be blamed. That is the Sense of this Expression, *except ye be Reprobates*, that is, *except there be somewhat in you, wherein you are much to blame*. I insist upon it the rather because I would not have the comfort and hope of any Soul wounded by misunderstanding of it.

There may be some doubt what it is, that this *Exception* doth refer to, whether it referreth unto their *being in Christ*, their having Christ in them, or whether it referreth to their *knowing* of it, their not knowing of themselves

selves so as to know that Christ is in them? But it is very plain, it referreth unto their *knowing* that Christ was in them, and not unto his *being in them*. Resolve the Words into a Logical form, and they lie thus; except ye be Reprobates, ye know your selves that Christ is in you: Besides, if the Apostle had not meant their *knowing* their State, but Christ's *being in them*, he would not have put in any such mitigating Expression, but he would rather have thundred it out, as he useth to do, when he speaketh of such a momentous fundamental Matter: If Christ be not in you, he would not have said, you are in somewhat to be disallowed; but you are in a State of Wrath and Condemnation, in danger of Hell, accursed of God: So he every where speaks of that State: But when he speaks of Believers not *knowing* their State, he puts in this allaying Expression, that such a one is to be disapproved in somewhat, there is somewhat amiss between God and him.

There are two Things in this *Motive*, with which the Apostle urgeth the foregoing Exhortation.

1. An Instruction to Believers, as to the way and means of their knowing *whether Christ be in them*. Know ye not *your own selves*, how that Christ is in you. Which holdeth out this

Fourth Observation; *That the way for a Christian to know that Christ is in him, is to know himself.*

2. Here's an Exception or Limitation, which the Apostle subjoineth for explaining himself; *Except ye be Reprobates*. From whence we have this

Fifth Observation: That for Christians not so to know themselves, as to know that Christ is in them, it sheweth they are Reprobates. I mean it still in the Sense before explained, there is somewhat amiss in them, there is somewhat in them which they should not indulge, and which God doth not allow; it is Sin, it is a shame unto them, if they do not know themselves so, as to know that Christ is in them. I shall begin with the First Observation. It is the Duty of Christians to examine themselves, or Self-examination is a Duty enjoyned by God upon Christians.

Psal. 77. 6. The Psalmist tells us he did Practice it, *I commune* (saith he) *with my own Heart, and my Spirit made diligent search*, Psal. 4. 4. it is exprelly commanded by God, *commune with your own Hearts*. The Psalmist examined himself, Psal. 119. 59. *I thought on, or considered my ways*. God calleth for it, Hag. 1. 5. 7. *Consider your ways*. God complains of the neglect of it, and lays it to the charge of Men as a crime that they do it not, Jer. 8. 6. *I barked and heard, but they spake not aright, no Man repented him of his wickedness, saying what have I done?* i. e. no Man examined himself, therefore saith God, no Man spake aright, their Consciences and Hearts none of them did Work aright.

Let me speak a little what this Self-Examination is. And then mention somewhat for further Conviction, that it is a Duty. And so make Application.

1. What is this Self-Examination? It is nothing else but the working of Conscience within a Man, when he doth reflect upon himself, and compare himself with the Rule of the Word;

so as to discern the agreement or disagreement that is between them, and to pass a Judgment upon himself accordingly. This is *Self-examination*. There are Three Things which I would speak a little to in this Description of Self-Examination. 1. The *Subject* of it, a Man's Self. 2. The *Rule* of it; the Word of God. 3. The *acting* of a Mans Conscience with Relation to himself and that Rule: For Self-examination looketh upon them both.

1. *The Thing examined is a Mans Self.* Examine your selves saith the Apostle here, *prove your selves*. It is a Mans Self with Reference unto God, and his concernments with God, himself as lying under the Judgment and Government of God, It is not himself meerly as a Creature, but himself as under Gods special Government by a Rule of living unto God. Hence under this short Word, *a Man's Self* there are these four Things contained.

(1.) *A Mans Covenant State.* Under what Head he stands, whether under the *First Adam*, or under the *Second*? Whether he be under the Covenant of *Grace*, or under the Covenant of *Works*, under the Law or under Grace? As the Apostle expresth it, *Rom. 6. 14.* For you know there are those two Covenants, and but those two that do declare and determine concerning Mens Spiritual Everlasting States, that of Works and that of Grace. The Head of the Covenant of Works is the *first Adam*, The Head of the Covenant of Grace is *Christ*. And that is one thing included in this Self, which we are to Examine; namely, what *Root* we grow on, what *Head* and *Covenant* we stand under? And this is a main and

a very fundamental inquiry, it is a Principal thing that ought to be brought under Examination.

(2.) A Mans Self includeth the *Frame and Disposition of his Heart*. What are the ruling Principles there, what Principles he hath in him, whether he hath nothing but *Flesh* in him? For so it is with all Men in their natural State, *John 3. 6. That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh*: Or whether there be Spirit in a Man as well as *Flesh*? So it is with all that are in Christ, *Gal. 5. 17. The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh*: In one Word, whether a Man have Grace or have it not? If he have it not, he is nothing but *Flesh*, he is wholly Carnal: If he have Grace, he is partly *Flesh* and partly Spirit. But that is not all, when I say Self which is to be examined includeth a Mans Frame; I mean also his Disposition. A Heart that hath Grace in it, may yet Labour under a woful indisposition to that which is good, it may be indisposed: So it was with the Spouse, *Song 5. 2. I sleep but my Heart waketh*. She was Christ's Spouse, she had Grace in her, yea, and Grace was working in her Conscience, *her Heart did Wake*; and yet Corruption, sinful sloth and security bowed her down and prevailed on her, *I Sleep*. And hence Self-examination is to enquire not only what Principles are within a Man, but into the *Activity and Prevalency*, into the *Measure and Degree* of those Principles, which of them hath the upper Hand: Self-examination ought to be carried so far, and to be Conversant about that enquiry *what a Mans Stature in Christ is*, not only whether

ther he have Grace, but what his Advances are in Sanctification.

(3.) Under this Word *Self*, as it is the Object of Examination, is included *the Mans Practice and ways what a Man hath done*. For this ought to come under Examination, and it is indeed the *First*, the most immediate Object of Self-examination; and by reflecting *thereon*, a Man comes to discern and conclude concerning both his *Frame*, and his *State*. A Man should examine his Practice and Way: *I considered my ways* saith David, *Psalms* 119. 59. *Consider your ways*, Hag. 1. 5. 7. Men in examining themselves should enquire what they have done: *No Man spake a right, saying, what have I done*, Jer 8. 5. A Mans way and Practice which is to be examined compriseth his *whole course*, which is commonly called his *Walk*. *Blessed is the Man that walketh not in the Counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of Sinners*, *Psalms* 1. 1. Such a Man's face is fixed heaven-ward, and the tendency of his Conversation is towards Eternal Life; and it includeth also the *particular steps* and passages of a Man's Walk; it is possible one whose general Course is holy and gracious may yet take some wry Steps in an Hour of Temptation, or a time of Desertion. *Peter and Barnabas* were godly Men, the stream of their Conversation did run heaven-ward; yet *Gal.* 2. 12, 13, 14. they took wry steps, did not walk with a right foot, but were to be blamed. *David* was a godly Man, had Grace in his Heart, he was a *man after God's own heart*, *Acts* 13. 22. but yet you know he fell foully in the matter of *Uriah* and *Bathsheba*. One that hath Grace in him as
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the ruling Principle, and whose general Course, Conversation and Walk is holy, may yet possibly, in some particular Passages, take a wry Step, therefore *these* are to be examined, and to come under a view and scanning in that self-inquiry which we are to make.

(4.) There is another thing included and comprised under this Self which is to be examined, and that is, *the present Terms with God in which the person standeth*. I do not mean his Covenant-State, that I spake of before; but I mean his present Terms with God, as to Communion and Favour, or as to fatherly displeasure and anger. One that is your Child, and that you never had a thought of casting off, may yet possibly so displease you, as that you may frown upon him, and shut him out of your sight, banish him from your Presence, he may be in ill Terms with you, and not be admitted to that Converse and Familiarity which ordinarily he is favoured with: And so it is with a Child of God, who is embraced in everlasting Arms of Covenant-Grace, and made a Child of God for ever; he may yet possibly fall into ill Terms with God his heavenly Father, may so provokingly miscarry, and contract such Guilt as that *the anger of the Lord may be kindled against him*. See Job 42. 7. where God speaking of Job's Friends that were godly men, saith, *against them my wrath is kindled*. That Displeasure which a Child of God may stir up and fall under, may be very great, bitter and terrible: What *Moses* speaks in general, is true here, *Who knows the power of Gods anger?* even of that Wrath which may for a season be kindled against a Child of his?
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such Wrath it may be as that God may *hide his face*, and frown upon his soul, *shut out his prayer*, follow him with stroke upon stroke, affliction upon affliction, yea, fill his Conscience with terrors and impressions of Wrath, God may *write bitter things against him*, give him Gall and Wormwood to drink, and yet be his Father still. This which I am upon, is I conceive, what Christ meaneth, *John 13. 10. He that is washed needeth not save only to wash his feet.* He maketh a distinction there between the washing of the *Person* (that is done in Justification) and the washing of a mans *feet*, which is the washing and cleansing him from particular Guilt which he may possibly contract upon himself by some mistaken and wry steps in his walking. Now this is the fourth thing included in that *Self* which is to be examined and inquired into; what are the Terms with God in which I stand? Have I access to God? have I converse and communion with him as a Child? Or am I at present shut out from his Presence, and is there displeasure against me? That is the first thing in the Description of Self-Examination, *The Subject*, or what this *Self* is which is to be examined.

2. *The Rule of Self-Examination*; and that is the *Word of God*, the Rule which God hath given us about living to him. It is not the Decree of God, for that is a *secret* thing, but *things revealed belong to us*. Tho it is true indeed Election is to come under Inquiry and Examination, *make your calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10. *Knowing Brethren, beloved, your Election of God*, 1 Thess. 1. 4. If Believers may know their Election they may then enquire
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concerning it. But the *Rule* by which we are to examine our selves, is *the revealed will of God*. And his revealed Will, by which we are to examine our selves respecteth, First, *Our Duty Godward*. Secondly, What we ought to *expect from him*; God's Dispensation or Judgment toward us. (1.) There is God's Rule about *our Duty Godward*, and that is the *directive* part of his Will concerning our *practice*. We are to bring our selves to *that*, and see how we come up unto it, or fall short of it. And (2.) God's Will, his Revealed Will, or Word which we are to examine our selves by, containeth also what he hath declared concerning his *own dealing with us*, and this is the ground of our *expectations from God*. There are his *Promises*, and there are his *Threatnings*. His Promises what he will work in us, what he will do *for us*. His Threatnings which we do incur and make our selves obnoxious to by breaking with God. And this is the Rule by which we are to examine our selves.

3. What are the *actings of a man's Conscience* in this *Self-Examination*? I will comprise them under two.

(1.) He compares *himself* and the *Rule* together, himself and the revealed Will of God, so as to discern the agreement or disagreement that is between them. And there is no Self-Examination without this; unless a Man see his conformity or disconformity to God's Will, it is not Self-Examination; it may be some *knowledge* of a Man's self, but it is not this *examining and proving* of himself which the Apostle speaketh of.

(2.) There

(2.) There is a *passing of a Judgment*, pronouncing of a Sentence (as I may say) concerning a Man's Self, and that in the Name of God, when Examination is carried to its due Issue and Upshot; because then the Conscience of a Man beareth witness within him in the Holy Ghost concerning the Grace of God in him, and the Grace exercised by him, and his Conformity to the Rule of God; or else Conscience beareth witness against him, and that by the Holy Ghost, concerning his Sin and Guilt. And hence his Conscience telleth him also what he is to expect from God; even a *Child of God* may and ought to expect the fulfilling of the *Promises* of God in the Covenant under which he is. Yea, if he hath broken with God, and plunged himself under *Fatherly Displeasure*, he is to expect the fulfilling of those *Threatnings* under which he is: But those Threatnings are limited and circumscribed, and they are consistent with the tenour of the Covenant of Grace; and thence a Believer, tho' he see himself guilty and fallen under fatherly displeasure, yet his Conscience may not pass Sentence against him as under the Curse of the Covenant of Works, nor as liable to eternal Wrath; his Conscience may not say he is out of Christ, when he is in Christ, or that he is graceless when he hath Grace, or that he is cast out of Covenant when he is in: Yet his Conscience ought in that very Case to bear witness, and that from the Holy Ghost, that there is no Recovery and being re-admitted into former Communion and Familiarity with God, but according to the way of the Covenant of Grace; that is, by renewal of Repentance, and

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Application to the Blood of Christ, judging and humbling himself before God, and so recovering his former Peace.

APPLICATION.

This Doctrine speaketh *Reproof* and *Conviction* for our Omission and Neglect of this Duty of Self-Examination. And I know many of us may sit here with shame and self-abhorrence, and have cause to go home reflecting upon our selves, and calling our iniquity to remembrance from the Word we have now bin hearing. Give me leave to put the inquiry home, Have you made Conscience of it, have you practis'd this Duty of Self-Examination? Or must you cry out guilty, guilty before God? Must you not lift up your guilty Hand at the Bar of God, as to these things? We are I fear strangers at home, unacquainted with our selves; the doubtfulness, darkness, irresolution that we go up and down with, whether we be in the Faith or whether Christ be in us, is an undeniable Evidence that we have been too negligent of this Duty of Self-examination. Some make (it may be) no Conscience of it, never had a Conviction or Thought upon their Hearts that this is a Duty required of them. *It is thy Duty*, as plainly thy Duty, as peremptorily enjoined as *keeping the Sabbath*, as *hearing the Word* of God, or *Praying*; and you may with as good a Conscience neglect *those* as *this*: And would not thy Conscience Condemn thee, would it not tear thy Soul to pieces if you have not prayed to God, if you live in the neglect of Prayer, what would your Con-

Conscience do? How can you be in Peace, when you live in the neglect of *Self-Examination*? It is not only a Sin against God, but it is a wrong to your *own Souls*, it goes ill with you all who neglect this. Some live and go on in an unreformed Course, increasing Guilt upon themselves, and making more Breaches between God and them every Day; and all because they do not consider their ways: *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies*, saith David, *Psal. 119. 59*. Others have Distempers and Maladies upon them, they have Heart Plagues and Sores running on them; Others, it may be, their Acquaintance and Friends discern their Distempers, but they never see them in themselves. What is the reason of all this? Men do not examine themselves, never commune with their own Hearts, never take a survey of their own ways, nor View these Plagues Sores in the Light of Gods Word. And even some who are Believers, are kept Lean and go up and down like Ghosts, not like flourishing, thriving Christians that are in Christ; what is the reason of it? It lyeth here, they examine not themselves. Others there are that live without Comfort, they walk in *Darkness* and see no *Light*, they have no Assurance concerning their Covenant State: What is the reason of it? They enquire not into themselves, and what hath past between God and them, the Evidences and Tokens of Gods Love unto them; they have them in their Bosoms, but they never look upon them. Others go up and down under strange security and Blindness, and reigning Delusion, concerning their own spiritual Con-

Condition: They have taken up a flattering Conceit that they are *Rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that they are miserable, and wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked.* It was so with *Laodicea*, *Rev. 3. 17.* But what is the reason of it, that Christians, that Professors who live in Places of Light, under a clear searching and rousing Ministry, should yet be carried away with such reigning Delusions about their own State? Truly it lyeth here, they do not *examine themselves.* Yea, there are many that pass through the World in a perpetual distraction and hurry, never examining, never Communing with their own Hearts, never sitting down and thinking under what Covenant they are, whether they are going, whether to Heaven or Hell; but Self-Love and Satan impose upon them a Sandy, unbottomed Hope that it will go well with them at last: But this is the reason of it, they Examine not themselves; if they would but look back upon their ways, and look down into their Hearts, they would quickly discover those things there which would speak aloud and Proclaim in their Consciences, that they *are in ill Terms with God.* Ay, but they examine not, and thence their Souls are betrayed into such woful Delusions. And let me add, it will never be better, nay it will grow worse and worse as long as you persist in this neglect; Distempers will increase, darkness and delusions will prevail more and more, and all this while Guilt will be increased. And give me leave to say, the Day is at Hand, and will shortly be upon you all who live in the neglect

lect of Self-Examination, when the Great God of Heaven will bring you to his Bar, and he will break into the dark Cell of that secure and sleepy Conscience of thine, and he will fill it as full of Terrour and Fuel then, as it is of Blindness and Security now: You are now, by not examining your selves, breeding that Worm which will never die, but will know upon your Souls to all Eternity. Neglect of *Self-Examination* is a mischievous, it is a pernicious, it is a Soul-ruining evil; you know not what Mischief you do unto your selves by living in it. All the Evils that you find your selves guilty of, you may justly impute them unto *this*, *this* was the Father that begot them, *this* the Mother that bred them, and you cannot expect to be delivered from them, nay, you must reckon things will grow worse and worse between your Souls and God, as long as this Neglect is persisted in.

K S E R

S E R M O N, VII.

2 COR. XIII. 5.

Examine your selves, whether ye be in the Faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates?

I Made some Entrance upon the first Doctrine from these Words, which was, *That Self-Examination is a Christians Duty.*

But because I told you, mine Eye in pitching upon this Text, was chiefly upon some plain practical *Directions* as to this great Duty; and because possibly they may be expected and desired, I shall at present pass over saying any thing to the other Observations, or speaking any further of *that* which I made some Entrance upon: And shall immediately address my self to give you some plain *Directions* about this great thing; tho' as to Method, it may be somewhat preposterous: For I would fain perswade my self that it is in the Hearts of some, yea of many, to put this Duty of Self-Examination into Practice, according to their Convictions; but the secret hindrance
and

and pull-back is, that they *know not how* to accomplish a diligent search into their own Hearts, so as to arrive at that happy Issue, *the knowing that Christ is in them.* The *Directions* I would give, I shall range under these Three Heads.

1. Some *preparative* Directions. For there are mistakes that are very unhappy, and fatal even in going about it, and taking it in Hand.

2. Some *Executive* Directions. For some that are convinced of this Truth, and their Hearts are reconciled to it, and do sometimes see above it; yet they are so weak or unskilful therein, as that they make no comfortable, but very sad Work of it.

3. I shall lay down some *Consequential* Directions. That is, what a Soul should do, or wherein lyeth his Duty, *after* he hath been Examining himself whether he in the Faith, and Christ be in him? And there will come Three Questions to be resolved; for the Answer must be according as the *Issue* of Self-Examination is; as *that* proveth, so the Duty of the Person is: And the Issue of Self-Examination will either be, that you will find things *well* between God and you: Or it will be that you will find things *ill* between God and you: Or else it will be that after Self-Examination, Matters between God and you will still remain under darkness, and uncomfortable *suspence* and *irresolution*, even as they did before. And hence the Question will arise in each of these Cases, *what shall a Soul do?*

I. To begin with First proposed: *Nomely*, some *Preparative* Directions about Self-Examination. I will mention but Three.

1. Labour to bring thy Heart into an *impartial unprejudiced Frame*. Lay aside prepossessions, lay aside byassing Thoughts and Corruptions, set aside Self-flatteries, set aside thy nearness to thy Self, and that Self-Love whereby we are so strongly inclined to think of our selves above what is meet: Self-love is an intoxicating Affection, especially when it grows unto any height, *that* therefore must be laid aside, as to its byassing Influence: We should indeed be so far under it, as to be awakened and engaged by it, unto a more thoroughness in this matter, because it is of such intimate and infinite Concernment unto our selves; but yet we should take heed of Self-love, so as to insnare us in Self-flattery, we should go upon the Work with a plain, honest, upright Heart, and should be willing to know the Truth, willing to know the worst that can be presented to the Eye of our Consciences, the worst concerning our selves. In Self-Examination we have to do with God, and we are therein inquiring at the Mouth of God: Conscience is the Officer of God; the Word of God which in Self-Examination, we are to look into and come under, it is Gods Voice, it is the Sentence and Judgment of God: Now when Men come to inquire of God, they must not come with *Idols in their Hearts, or Stumbling-blocks of their Iniquity before their Faces*, lest God Answer them in Vengeance by himself, lest he leave them to be deceived, *Ezek. 7.*

3. 8.

2. When you go about Self-Examination, go about it *seriously*, get thy Heart in a *serious and solemn Frame*. Be like one that hath to do

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with God, as one that is in expectation to have the Sentence of God concerning his Soul, declared unto him : Thou art, when about Self-Examination, to set thy self as at the Tribunal of God, as one that is to receive his Judgment from God, even from the Mouth of God himself. And besides, the thing that you are about is a thing of *Infinite Weight and Moment* : If you should entertain and go away from Self-Examination with a *mistaken* Thought concerning your good Condition, you will *feed upon Ashes*, which will be a *Lye in your Right-Hand* ; that mistaken Thought will be an Astonishment and benumbing Poyson to thy Conscience, to blind and lay it asleep, yea, it will (if continued in) lay thy Heart asleep in Everlasting Chains of Darkness and Security. And on the other Hand, if you go away with a mistaken Thought that things are *not* well with you when they are ; you disparage God, deny his Grace, gratifie the Devil, prejudice your own Comfort, *grieve the Blessed Spirit by whom you are sealed unto the Day of Redemption*, You should therefore be serious in this Work, a transient a passing Thought or glance no ways answereth the Weight of this thing : you should therefore Examine your selves with seriousness of Spirit ; *stand in aw*, saith God, *Psalms 4. 4.* But when is it that the aw of him should be awakened in our Hearts ? It is when we *Commune with our own Hearts upon our Beds*. If thou wilt set about the Duty in good earnest take a *Time*, a *set time*, to sequester, and set your self apart for this Work of Self-Examination : To have a reflecting Thought upon thy self, only

when under a startling Word or Ordinance, or it may be under an afflictive distressing Providence, but to Live the most of thy Time and Days in Diversions and regardlessness, Oh how sinful is this ! And what will be the end of such a Course ?

3. Labour to *ingage* God to be with thee in thy Examining thy Self : Call in the Help and Presence of God. The Assistance of the Holy Spirit of God is as necessary in *this* Duty as in any other, and in some respect more than in many others. Christ tells us, *without Him we can do nothing*, John 15.5. Surely so difficult a work as this of Self-Examination, can't be discharged aright and to Advantage and Comfort without Help from Christ. The Duty of Prayer, the Apostle tells us that we need the Help of the Holy Ghost in it, Rom. 8. 26, 27. *For we know not what to pray for as we ought, but he helpeth our Infirmities* : It is no less True, no less Evidently true concerning *Self-Examination* ; how to manage it and carry it through we know not, we must have the Help of the Holy Ghost with us, if we would do any thing to purpose in it. *We are not* (saith the Apostle) 2 Cor. 3. 5. *sufficient of our selves to think any thing, as of our selves* ; not to think a Thought, not to think any thing as we should ; he speaketh it particularly of Ministers, with Respect to their Thoughts and preparations for their Publick Ministration ; but if it be true of them, it is no less true of you, that are Private Christians, with respect to this Duty of Self Examination, that you have no sufficiency to think a Thought in it, as you ought to do. We have (Brethren) deceitful Hearts, *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*, the

the Lord alone doth know them, *Jer. 17. 9.* And we have Hearts that are as *as deeply Treacherous* as they are desperately wicked; and they will play as many wry and deceitful tricks in this Duty of Self-Examination, as at any other time. Our Consciences are deep as well as our Hearts deceitful, and the things to be searched into are inward, deep and Spiritual. It's true, *the Candle of the Lord* which is set up in every Man, that *Spirit of the Man* doth search the inward Parts of the Heart, *Prov. 20. 27.* But yet, that Candle of the Lord must be lighted by the Holy Spirit, yea, it must be managed by the Spirit, the Spirit of God must take that Candle of the Lord, and pass from Room to Room, from Chamber to Chamber, and make us see the deep, the inward, the secret, the spiritual things which are there, and ought to be found out, discerned and reflected on by Self-Examination. Go out therefore unto, and enter upon this Work, in a dependance upon the Spirit of God for Help and Guidance; put thy Heart under his Conduct, beseech and beg of him whose Name is a Spirit of *Conviction*, and a *reprover* to those that are *not* in Christ, and whose Name and Office is to be to them that are in Christ a Spirit of *Adoption* and *Consolation*, sealing them up unto the Day of Redemption; beg that *He* would be with thee, and help thee in the Duty thou takest in Hand.

II. As to *Executive* Directions, how the Work should be managed and carried on when engaged in, there are Four things that I would lay before you: I would be as Comprehensive

in them as I could, and yet I would be plain; but I am affraid we are so unexercised many of us in this Work of Self-Examination, as that it is a difficult thing to speak about it, both comprehensivly, and yet to Profit and Advantage.

1. Labour to be distinct and clear in *that which is the special Subject* of thy Self-Examination: *State the Question aright*, fix it in thy Mind, what it is that thou wouldst Examine thy Self about. For (as you heard in opening the First Doctrine) *Self* here is a Comprehensive Word, therefore fix thy enquiry whether it be thy State that thou wouldest find out, whether in the Faith, whether in Christ or no? Or whether it be thy present *Frame* that thou wouldest inquire into? whether that be lively or dead, whether thou art growing or declining, and the like? Or whether it be any *particular Passage* of thy way before the Lord, that thou wouldest bring under Examination and Tryal? For that is a Christians Duty, he should review his own Spirit, and see both the Errors and Integrity of that; and when he hath stepped aside, he should Ponder the Evil Path; that is, he should Weigh the Iniquity of it, to load and burden his own Soul with it. Or lastly, whether it be the *Terms with God*, in which at present you stand? Because a Child of God may possibly fall into ill Terms with God; altho' not cast out of a State of Favor, yet he may be debarred from the free and familiar Communion with God, which sometimes he was taken up into. Now this is necessary in the First Place, that in Examining your selves you would fix upon, and
State

State it clearly in your own Thoughts, *what is the thing I would inquire into?* The want of this, sometimes makes Self-Examination prove both unsuccessful and also tedious: Men have some discoveries made of themselves, but they are not brought to a determinate Issue, there is no Conclusion drawn and fixed from them: It is much of it from hence, the inquiry is not clearly stated in Mens own Thoughts, what they would Prosecute and be resolved in by Self-Examination.

2. Be sure to proceed by *Rules certain and true.* This is of absolute necessity: You will be deceived and deluded else, you will Build else upon the Sand without a Foundation, a Building that will tumble down, yea, a Building which God, if he loveth thee, will make thee pull down first or last with thy own Hand. And Christians should the rather be careful and critical in the Rules, by which they proceed in Examining themselves, because *that* which is a true Rule, and of excellent Use for the discovery of what a Mans *Frame* is, may yet be a false and deceitful Rule as to what a Mans *State* is; and so in other Cases: For instance, a Christian upon Examining himself, may possibly come under this Conviction, *it is not so well with me, as once it was as to the Frame of my Heart: I am under deadness, Corruption hath grown up and gotten Head, Graces are more withering and languishing; if it be thus, the Conclusion that follows from it will be, my Frame is not so good, things are not altogether so well between God and me, as they were: But for such an one therefore to infer his State, is a State of Wrath and*
Christ

Christ is not in him; this is a false Conclusion, the Rule will not bear it: It's possible thou mayest be in Christ, and yet Temptation lie hard upon thee, Corruption get loose; you may be plunged into sadder distances from God, then once you were, and yet your Covenant State be good.

3. When you have thus taken up Rules which are true and certain, *labour to abound in the Application of them to your selves.* Application is one Part of the Work of Conscience, in Examining a Mans Spirit; now Christians should *abound* in that part of Consciences Work in Self-Examination. I mean plainly this, you should *multiply* Evidences and Convictions upon your selves how it is with you: Do not rest or take up with some *one* thing that speaketh either well or ill, but gather *manifold* Evidences and Convictions round about you, and set them all before the Eye of thy Conscience together: *That* is the way to bring Self-Examination unto some good Issue. The Scripture, and Divines from Scripture, do in this Case tell us of *positive* and *negative* signs, they tell us likewise of *exclusive* and *inclusive* Signs: I can't stand to open the meaning of the Expressions, that which I mention them for, is to show there are *several* sorts of signs to Evidence the *same* thing: Now it is the Duty and Wisdom of a Christian, to gather as many of them about him, and set them before the Eyes of his Conscience as he can. You shall find that the Holy Ghost in Scripture, when he is helping us to know and Examine our selves, he turneth both sides of our selves to our selves, *Rom.*

8. 1. *There is no Condemnation to them which are*

in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh but after the Spirit. Not walking after the Flesh is but one side, if you have not the Evidence of one that is in Christ to whom there is no Condemnation: Now if a Soul in Examining himself shall take up with *this*, and because Conscience saith, *I do not walk after the Flesh*, shall thence Conclude he is in Christ, and there is no Condemnation to him; he maketh the Conclusion too hastily, and exposeth himself to Self-deceiving; because the Evidence is not so full as the Holy Ghost intendeth, who addeth the *positive* Part unto the *negative*, that so the Evidence may be full and satisfactory even to those that are of a fearful, trembling Heart, *Psalms* 1. 1, 2. You have a description of the Man to whom blessedness belongeth; but how is he described by the Holy Ghost? First by *negatives*, what he is *not*, *he walketh not in the Counsel of the ungodly, he standeth not in the way of Sinners, he sitteth not in the Seat of the scornful*: There is what he is *not*: But will this now be a just, due Evidence to a Mans Conscience that blessedness belongeth to him? No, you may deceive your selves if you take up there: Foolish Virgins may have Lamps, make a Blaze, go forth to meet the Bridegroom, may keep company with the Wise. The Holy Ghost therefore addeth in that forementioned *Psalms*, but *his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night*. This way of the Holy Ghost in Scripture, sheweth what way we should take with our own Souls in Examining and Judging concerning them. You must not only be able to say as the *Pharisees*, *I am not thus and thus, as* such

such and *such* are ; you must not take up with *negatives*, but you must labour to find *positives* and *affirmatives* : And you must not only find *one* or *two*, but Labour to find *many*, and set them all before the Eyes of your Conscience. This is the way to make the Conviction strong, to make it overbear thy fears, and doubts and darkness.

4. *Whatever Sentence concerning your selves Conscience bringeth from true Rules rightly applied, do you take as the Judgment of God.* You ought to do so, you are bound in Conscience to take the Verdict of Conscience, upon grounds that are true and sure, rightly applied ; you are bound to receive it as the Judgment of God. What the Word speaketh, and what the Spirit speaketh in and by thy Conscience enlightned and conducted by it, God from Heaven speaketh : But now when Conscience speaketh according to Rules that are sure and true and rightly applied, this the Word speaketh, this the Spirit speaketh ; and therefore God from Heaven speaketh ; and you should be affraid of rejecting, dis-believing, or doubting it for the Future. What God speaketh is certainly true, the Word of God is as sure as the Pillars of Heaven, you cannot be deceived by any Verdict which Conscience bringeth in according to the Word of God. It is the Sin and desperate madness of unconvinced and hard-hearted Sinners, that tho' Conscience according to the Word of God tells them their way is Evil, their State dangerous and Damnable ; yet they believe it not, regard it not, lay it not to Heart. And it is sometimes the Sin and Folly of those on
whom

whom God hath wrought some better things, even things that accompany Salvation ; yea, it is the Sin of some that are afraid, and whose Hearts would tremble at despising the Threatnings of God, that yet they disregard and do not improve his Words of Peace and Comfort, they put them away far from them as not belonging to them, and thence their Souls refuse to be comforted, Psalm 77. 1. 2. The Psalmist there acknowledgeth that he *had* cried to God with his Voice, and God had given Ear unto him ; God had given him a sensible Pledge and Evidence of his Acceptance with him, of the Interest he had in him, for the Answer God had given him was *so* ; now was the Psalmists Heart comforted, settled, and satisfied ? No, if you look but to the next Verse, he complaineth that *his fore ran in the night, and his Soul refused to be comforted*, yea, he was troubled, and his Spirit overwhelmed, as you will find in the next Verse : And yet he came afterwards ver. 10. to see it was his Infirmary, and that even *at that time* when it was thus with him, he had a sensible Pledge and Demonstration of the Favour of God. Take you heed of such a foolish froward miscarriage ; put not away comfort, when Conscience and the Word of God say it belongs to you ; as you should not put away Conviction and trouble, when Conscience and Gods Spirit in thy Bosom according to the Word, say it belongs to you.

III. Some Directions which are *Consequential* ; What should a Soul do after he hath Examined himself ? The Answer in short is plainly this, thy Duty is according to the issue of Self-

Self-Examination: And the Issue will either be, that you will find matters well between God and you, or ill; or else you will remain in dark and uncomfortable irresolution. Hence there are Three Questions.

1. What shall I do in case I find things well?
2. What in Case I find things ill?
3. What in Case I can arrive at no Resolution on one way or other?

1. In Case you find upon Examination, that Matters are well between God and you, your Duty lies in such things as these:

(1.) You should *bless his Name with enlargedness of Heart*, that he hath brought Matters to such a pass, and that his Love hath so abounded and overflowed towards thee, that he hath let thee know it. David when he saw his Sins were pardoned, breaketh out, *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, Bless his Holy Name, Psalm 103. 1. 2, 3.* Go and do likewise: There is not a Soul under Heaven, that is under greater Bonds of Love and humble thankfulness than thou, between whom and God, God hath made things well, and hath also cleared it up unto thee. You should do in that Case as those *Four and Twenty Elders*, whose Practice you may see, *Rev. 4. 10. 11. They fell down before him that sat on the Throne, and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their Crowns before the Throne.* God by making things well between him and thee, and letting thee know it, hath set a Crown upon thy Head, *crowned thee with loving-kindness and tender Mercies*; fall down therefore before his Face, Adore him, cast thy Crown down at his Feet, begin thy Song of Praise and

and Hallelujah to that gracious and glorious Name of his.

(2.) *Walk watchfully and circumspectly*, lest there be new Breaches made between thee and God. There are none that are laid under greater Bonds, than those which God hath brought upon thee, greater Bonds to Circumspect and watchful walking. Christ in giving thee this comfortable and satisfying sight of thine Interest in him, bespeaketh thee as he doth the Church of Philadelphia, *Rev. 3. 11. Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no Man take thy Crown.* Behold I come quickly to thee that hast Assurance, it will not be long, but he will take thee to Heaven, thou art set upon the Borders of Heaven already, let not that Assurance be lost, let no Man take thy Crown from thee. The Apostle exhorteth Believers not to cast away their Confidence, which hath great recompence of reward, *Heb. 10. 35. We are the House of God, and partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our Confidence stedfast unto the end, Heb. 3. 6. 14.* Thou that hast got some beginning of Assurance watch over it with earnestness of Heart, that it be not lost or impaired.

(3.) There is this Duty lies upon you further, *Labour to increase your Assurance*, and make things better and clearer between God and thee every Day. Those Believers to whom the Apostle Peter writeth, *2 Pet. 1. 10. He bids them to give all diligence to make their Calling and Election sure*; and yet these very Believers, if you look into the first Epistle, *chap. 1. ver. 8. 9.* You will find that they had Assurance already, nay, they did in believing
rejoice

rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, they did receive the end of their Faith the Salvation of their Souls. He speaks of them as those that were got into Heaven already; and yet sometime after this, he bids them give all diligence to make their Calling and Election sure. So I say, thou rejoicest with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, thou hast already gotten the end of thy Faith, the Salvation of thy Soul, thou art possessed of it: Ay, but yet give all diligence still, to make thy Calling and Election sure.

(4.) Go forth unto all the Duties that are before you with alacrity and humble Confidence. And who knoweth when he hath got Assurance, what are the Duties that may yet be before him? Certain it is this Joy of the Lord should be thy Strength, Neh. 8. 10. It should add help, Spirit, and Vigor to thee, for all that Work which lyeth upon thy Hand to do for God; and much Work there is that lyeth upon the Hands of a Believer that hath attained Assurance; there are conflicts remaining, Battels that are yet to be fought, you must expect new assaults, assaults it may be more fierce then any you have hitherto met withal. When the Captain of your Salvation was sealed from Heaven by that audible Voice, *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*, and by that visible Sign the Spirit of God like a Dove descending upon him, He was immediately driven into the Wilderness and tempted of Satan, Mar. 1. 10, 11. &c. So it may be with you: thou art sealed by the Holy Ghost to the Day of Redemption, thou mayest be led into the Wilderness to be tempted by the Devil afterwards.

As there may be new assaults and Battels to be fought, so there are other Duties to be done; Corruptions to be further mortified, other Graces to be Exercised and further perfected: There is it may be some Work lyeth upon thy Hand, for the Name and Interest of God; go forth now unto these Duties with fresh alacrity and humble Confidence. I remember how the Angel sometimes spoke to Gideon, *Judg. 6. 12. 14. the Lord is with thee, thou mighty Man of Valor, go in this thy might*: So say I to thee, who upon Self-Examination findest things well between God and thee, go forth thou Blessed happy Saint of God, go forth to the Work that lyeth before thee, go forth in this thy Strength: In this thy Strength did I say? Nay, go forth in the Strength, and in the Grace and Name of the *Lord thy God who is with thee*, the God that hath given thee Assurance; yea, thou mayest reckon on it, he will help thee in all Duties that are upon thy Hand.

2. *What if things upon Self-Examination be found ill between God and thee?* Thy Duty then is accordingly.

(1.) *Bless God for that discovery.* It is an unvaluable *Mercy* to be convinced, and made to see that things are ill between God and thee.

(2.) *Do not slight that Conviction; but follow it on.* Tho' it be a sad and bitter thing, yet slight it not, nor do thou stifle or resist it.

(3.) *Take heed of miscarrying* in that which is thy Duty and concernment: Either through secret *sinking* and *desponding*; or through *slightness* and *falseness* of Heart. Thou hast

erred that way already ; if thou mistakest the same way again, the Second mistake will be worse, and more dangerous then the First.

3. Suppose that upon Self-Examination, a Man can arrive at no certain Issue ; neither Conviction on the one Hand, that things are *ill* between God and him ; nor yet a Satisfaction on the other Hand, that things are *well* ; what is the Duty of the Soul in that Case ? I would have answered, and spoken somewhat largely to that Case in two Points.

(1.) Take in Convictions and settle them upon thy Heart, that there is a certain *possibility*, and there is a great *necessity* that you get out of this Condition.

(2.) You may then, yea, you *should* conclude, that there is *somewhat or other much amiss between God and you* ; and you should search after it and find it out. It will be either that your *State* is bad : Or else, that there is much amiss in the *Frame* of your Hearts, or in your *Way* before God : Either the *Work of Gods Grace* (if it be in Truth in you) is low ; or the *Eye of thy Conscience* is dim, and cannot well discern it ; or the assent of thy *Faith* unto the Word of Peace and Comfort is weak and feeble : Or there are sad *mistakes* in the way of thy Examining and Judging concerning thy Self.

But it may be it will be asked, *what should a Soul do when he is so much in the dark, and in such endless mazes, as that he can neither get Convictions that things are ill, nor Satisfaction that things are well, nor yet find out where the flaw and error lyeth ; what should a Soul do in that Case ?*

Give me leave to Answer it in Three Words.

Words. In the *General* I would say this, it is a rare and extraordinary Case, it is seldom or never so with one that is faithful to God, and faithful to his own Soul in the discharge of this Duty: But supposing it, then I would leave three things with such.

1. *Go and lament thy Condition unto God*, shew him *all* thy trouble, tell him how it is with thee, *ask* and inquire of him concerning the *cause* and reason of it, and *beseech* him to *shine in upon thy Soul*, to discover the Matter fully. I will say unto God, *saith David*, when his Soul was cast down within him, *I will say unto God, why hast thou forgotten me? Psa. 42. 9.* So do thou, be much in saying unto God, inquiring of God, why is it thus with me? Why am I left to this endless darkness and perplexity of a guilty, guileful, unbelieving heart? It is he, and he only can make light to shine forth in darkness, it is he only can Conduct thy Spirit from these inextricable Mazes and Labyrinths which thou art in; therefore commit thy self to him, leave thy Soul upon him, and do this much, and frequently.

2. There is a compendious and expeditious way for a Soul to take in this Case, that is this, go without more ado and cut all Knots in Pieces, *by making thy Heart perfect with God in those great things, wherein a Soul is translated from Death to Life.* In this way set about the Work of *Conversion*, as if thou hadst never been converted, as if there had never been any thing done of this. Revive thy Convictions, call for thy troubles of Heart, Stab and Wound thy Self with a Sense of Sin, as in Days of former distress; review thy own Condition, take it home, own it, see and feel

that it is a sinking, lost, perishing Condition, a ruined Condition : Unbottom thy Self from all other Confidences, take off thy Fingers from all other hopes, thy Hands from all other things but Christ ; view him, set him before thee, venture on him, refer thy self unto his free and Sovereign Grace. When a Soul can make no *claim* to Christ, as having an Interest in him ; yet a Soul may see himself under the *Sovereignty* of God ; and there is a *Sovereignty of Grace and Mercy* as well as *Power*. And this is thy Wisdom, it is the most compendious way thou canst take, to cut all Knots in pieces, and lay hold on Christ with earnestness for Eternal Life.

3. *Hold on in this way* : Do not wax weary, let not thy Hands hang down, or Knees grow feeble in this Way and Work of God about thy own Salvation. *That* is the only thing to be feared by a Soul that is under Perplexity, lest you should turn aside from following God, after some lying Vanity : As *Samuel* said unto *Israel*, when startled and convicted, 1 Sam. 12, 20, 21. *Fear not, ye have done all this Wickedness ; yet do not fear. A strange Word ! Do not fear, tho' they had incensed God, and God had thundred down his Wrath from Heaven against them ; yet saith Samuel do not fear. What shall they do then ? Only take heed unto your selves, that you turn not aside from following the Lord ; turn ye not aside to go after vain things. So I say to you : Tho' there be darkness in thy Case, distress and anguish round about thee, and ready to overwhelm thee ; yet do not fear. Fear nothing, but lest a Treacherous and deceitful Heart should*

should turn thee aside, and make thee fall off from following God: Hold on in this way; in lamenting thy Case, and telling it to God, and laying hold on his Sovereign Grace through Christ, making thy Heart more perfect therein; and hold on in this way; it will be Peace in the latter end, God from Heaven, if you persevere therein, will break in with Light and Comfort, visit you with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory; he will Establish and settle thy Soul in an Assurance, that things are well between him and thee, and that they shall be so unto Eternal Life.

SERMON VIII.

2 COR. XIII. 5.

Examine your selves, whether ye be in the Faith, prove your own selves—

WHAT I was last upon, was to give some Practical Directions for this so great and momentous a Duty of Self-Examination, and that in Three Cases.

I. Suppose upon Self-Examination a Christian findeth he is in the Faith, and that Christ is in him; what shall he do? To that, Answer was

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given

given in the close of the last Exercise. The other two Cases (*What Men shall do when they find things ill. And what when things hang in Suspence*) remain to be further spoken to now: And I shall speak a little more largely to them.

II. Suppose upon Self-Examination, a Soul findeth that things are ill between God and him: Suppose a Soul findeth that Christ is not in him, that he is not in the Faith; *what is his Duty upon this Discovery?*

I Answer there are Three Things, which that discovery calleth upon a Soul for.

1. *Be very thankful for it.* It is indeed a bitter and wounding discovery, but yet you should be very thankful for it, for there is great Mercy in it.

2. *Follow on this Conviction*; and do not either stifle or slight it.

3. *Take heed of miscarrying in the Work that is before thee now*, with Reference to the State of thy Soul.

1. *Be thankful for this discovery.* It is a Mercy, and a Mercy which God oweth thee not; he might have left thee to Self-deceiving, to have lived in a golden Dream, or presumptuous Confidence till there had been no Remedy: There are many that bear a Name, and live under choicest Ordinances that yet are left unto such a miscarriage, Rev. 3. 17. *The Church of Laodicea were wretched, miserable, Poor, Blind, and naked*; and yet thought that they were *Rich, and increased with Goods, and had need of nothing.* It is possible for Persons of a high Profession to be under the Power of such Self-deceivings, yea, there are such whom the Lord letteth lye in them

them, till it be too late, *Mat. 7. 22, 23.* There are many that will say unto Christ in that Day, Lord, Lord, open unto us, we have prophesied in thy Name, and cast out Devils in thy Name; and yet the Lord disowneth and disavoweth them as workers of Iniquity. It holdeth forth thus much, that a Person may live in such a deluded Confidence even to the last. Those foolish Virgins, *Mat. 25.* that took Lamps without Oil, were never awakened to discern, never convinced that they wanted Oil, till the cry was made at Midnight, behold the Bridegroom cometh. God might have left you under the same Delusion, he was under no Bonds to deliver and rescue you: Because he hath done it, you should bless his Name; it is some Argument of Hope that it is not yet too late, but that he who hath in such a way of Sovereign and preventing Grace and Power, saved you from that Delusion, doth intend also to do farther for you, doth also intend to make your State good, and to bring you into Christ.

2. A Soul that findeth upon Examining himself that he hath not Christ in him, that he is not in the Faith; should follow on that Conviction, should neither stifle it, nor be slighty under it.

(1.) Do not stifle it, by turning away thy Thoughts from it, but let thy Mind dwell upon this, even what God hath discovered thee to be: Yea, you should follow on the discovery yet further and further: Commonly the First Light that God letteth in upon Mens Consciences about their Spiritual Condition, is but weak and dim; they see but little of what God doth lead them to the Visions of before he hath done with them. You see it

may be now, that things are not *well* between God and you ; but alas you do not see in what *regard* or *degree* they are ill : There are different Measures of things being ill between a Mans Soul and God ; sometimes there is defilement upon a Christians *walk*, and Guilt upon his Spirit answerable, when yet his *State* is good : There are whose *State* is clean, and yet their Feet need washing. Sometimes a Man's *State* may be good as to Covenant relation unto God, and Interest in Christ, and yet the Heart may be woefully out of *Frame* ; deadness, or some other defiling Distemper, may have grown up and prevailed upon it, it was so with the Church at *Sardis*, *Rev.* 3. 1. 2. They had good things in them, *things* that ought to be *strengthened* ; but those goods things were *ready to dye*, and so near to dying, that the Lord charged them as those that were dead, *I know thy Works, that thou hast a Name that thou livest, and art dead*. Sometimes a Mans *State* is ill, as well as his *way* or his *Frame* : Namely, when he is in Unbelief and out of Christ, his *State* is then a State of Condemnation. Now if God let in any little beam of Light upon your Consciences, whereby you see things are not *well* between God and you ; you should follow on the discovery, till you see *distinctly* and clearly in what *regard* and *measure* things are ill : You should not only follow home the Conviction, but fasten it upon your own Consciences. We have Treacherous and slippery Hearts, that are apt to slide away from Convictions of this kind, when let in upon us ; yea, we have Hearts that are full of blindness and contradiction

tion to the Truth ; there is deceit, guile, and Self-flattering in them, and thence, tho' the Conscience have so much light as to see things are not well, our Hearts will be ready to entertain contrary suggestions. But you should deal in that Case as *Samuel* did with *Saul*, when he challenged him that he had not done the Judgment of the Lord upon *Amalek*, and *Saul* pleaded his own Cause ; saith *Samuel*, *what meaneth the bleating of the Sheep, and the lowing of the Oxen which I hear ?* So when your Hearts suggest to you, that you are in Christ, and have Faith, reply to your Hearts and say, what meaneth then the *pollutedness of my way, my walking after the Flesh*, and not after the Spirit ? What then meaneth the darkness, deadness, depravedness of my Heart ? What meaneth the unmortifiedness of such and such Corruption ? It is an Eternal Truth, that *they that are Christs have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*, Gal. 5. 24. It is an Eternal Truth, as sure as the Pillars of Heaven, that *if any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature, old things are passed away, all things are become new*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. If thou art not a new Creature, if the old Frame and workings of thy Heart remain with thee still, and there be no new Things brought into thee, thou should'st convince thy own Soul, that thou art not in Christ, and thou should'st fix and fasten that Conviction, and bear down your own Heart therewith : yea, if by Self-flattering thy Heart do still without Cause, and with a great deal of Impudence suggest unto thee, that things are right, you should deal with it as the Angel did with *Sarab*, Gen. 18.

15. When she was arraigned for laughing through Unbelief, and she *denied it, saying, she laughed not* : The Angel replied, *ay, but thou did'st laugh*, and so putteth her to silence, and getteth the last Word : So should you to your own contradicting Heart, you should put it to silence, and get the last Word, and say, *ay*, but I am *not* in the Faith, I have not Christ.

(2.) And as you should not stifle Convictions, so you should not *flight* them, and give way to sencelessnes of Heart. As it is a woful thing to have only *confused blind Convictions* in general, that things are not well between God and thee ; So it is a very fearful thing to have *Convictions that you are not in Christ, and yet be hard hearted and senceless under those Convictions* : There is no Conviction that should be more wounding and piercing to the Souls of Sinners, than *this*, that they are out of Christ ; for nothing speaketh more sadly unto the Soul than *this*, no not a Conviction of being guilty of the grossest Sin whatsoever against the Law of God. Labour therefore to get your *Hearts affected* with what you see of your own Condition : to be convinced of it, and *senceless* under it, is a great *wickedness* of Heart, it is a despising both of the Mercy and the Authority of God ; yea, it is a despising of Christ, and an Interest in him, and it is a despising of the concernment and Life of thy own Soul : It is also very incensing unto God, for a Soul to remain *hard and slighty-spirited* under Convictions that he is not in Christ. How dreadful will the indictment against thee be, when God shall plead against thee and say, yonder is such a Sinner, I prevented

vented him with the work of my Spirit, awakened him, set him about examining himself, and I let Light into his Conscience about his Condition ; and tho' I hung these Chains upon him, yet he goeth up and down with a *slighty, senceless, careless* Frame of Spirit, *Isa.* 22. 12, 13, 14. You have God by the Prophet speaking to this purpose, *In that Day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth ; but behold joy and gladness, slaying Oxen, and killing Sheep, saying let us eat and drink, &c. And it was revealed in mine Ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this Iniquity shall not be purged from you, till you die.* In the Fifth Verse, there is a description of thy very Case, who art convinced thou art not in the Faith, Christ is not in thee, 'tis with thee a *Day of trouble and perplexity* : And by this Conviction, the Lord of Hosts from Heaven calleth upon thee for *mourning, and girding with sackcloth, ver. 12.* in the next verse is a description of thy carriage, *slaying of Oxen, &c.* *Slightiness and sencelessnes* of Heart, and a Frame unanswerable to this call of God : See in the next Verse thy doom ; surely saith the Lord of hosts, *this Iniquity shall not be purged from you till you dye* : This is the Judgment of God concerning thee, who under thy Convictions dost go up and down with a *senceless, regardless* Spirit. There is not a Soul under these Heavens of the Lord, that is more concerned to go up and down with *forrow, and bitterness, and mourning* in his Heart, than thou who art, and *seest thou art in Unbelief and out of Christ.* Look to it therefore, if God hath let in that Conviction on thee,

thee, look to it that all your reflections on your self, all your Employment in the World, all your Applications unto God, be filled with *lamentations* and bitter Self-bemoanings, because of this thy sad Condition.

3. Take heed of *miscarrying now in the concernment and work that is before thee*. Thou art without Christ, and art convinced of it; and what is thy Work now? Now it is thy special solemn Work to get into Christ, to make thorough Work of it between thy Soul and God in that great matter; take heed, I say, of *miscarrying* therefore in that Work. Thou hast erred that Error already, Err it again, and the Second Error will be worse than the First, more provoking to God, more hazardous, more ensnaring and entangling to thy own Soul; an Error from which you will with more difficulty be recovered. There are two ways whereby Souls in this Case, under these Convictions, are in danger to miscarry: I would warn you of them both.

(1.) A secret, sinking, despondency and hopelessness. Despair doth not always make the Conscience cry out and roar: No, there is a silent smothered despair, by which the Soul bleeds inwardly, and bleeds and pineth to Death. And these despairing and desponding Thoughts art apt to arise, and to be entertained in the Hearts of those that fall under this Conviction, that Christ is not in them, after they have a long time nourished other Hopes, and made a Profession, and it may be, had an esteem among Men as those that were the Members of Christ; but when God letteth in Convictions of their hollowness and Hypocrisie,

Hypocrisie, those Convictions are apt to be overwhelming. But despairing, discouraged Thoughts are pernicious, and Soul ruining; the tendency of them you may see, *Jer. 2. 25.* *There is no Hope, therefore Strangers have I loved, and after them will I go.* For when a Soul takes in Thoughts that *there is no Hope*, because (saith the Soul) I have but dallyed with God, and deceived my self in time past, and now there is no hope: The next Thought is, therefore Strangers have I loved, and after them will I go. Take heed therefore of that secret smothered despair and hopelessness.

(2.) Take heed of miscarrying by *slightness, and falseness of Heart in thy future dealings, and transactings with God.* Herein it is thou hast deceived thy self in time past, let thy former Error be a warning against the same in time to come. If ever a Soul be concerned to make thorough work of it, and be in earnest between it Self and God, thou art: Look to it then, that thou makest thorough Work of it, in all those great things which use to be between God and Souls, in their translating from Death to Life. Get clearer *Convictions*, and fresher sights of thy own Guilt, misery, and perishing Condition: Get thy Heart more *deeply affected* and wounded, and humble thy Self greatly before God: Make more thorough Work of it in *coming off from all other Confidences*, and being wholly and entirely unbottomed from them: Make thy Heart perfect with God in *flying unto Christ*, taking hold on the Covenant and Promise of *Free-Grace*, and committing, and venturing thy Soul with all earnestness of dependance upon that way of
Salvation

Salvation for Sinners revealed in the Gospel. Christ telleth us *Mat. 11. 12.* that the Converts under *John the Baptists Ministry*, were clothed with a Spirit of Holy Violence, and took the Kingdom of Heaven by force. You of all Persons living, should venture upon a Spirit of Holy Violence, in taking the Kingdom of God: You of all others should strive to enter in at the strait Gate, *Luke 13. 24.* And putting your Souls into Holy Agonies, and wrestling, and striving with God about this matter, you should lay hold as the Apostle saith upon *Eternal Life*, *1 Tim. 6. 12.*

III. A Third Case I would speak to, is this; what if upon examining my Self, Matters remain still in the dark, and under doubt and irresolution, I can't come to any determinate Conclusion, whether Christ be in me, yea, or no, what should I do in that Case?

I know not well whether there be much need to speak to it, the Case in Truth is so exceeding rare: Those that do Examine themselves with any measure of conscienciousness, do arrive at some resolution: But the business is not so much want of light, as want of willingness to receive and fall under the Light that shineth into their Consciences. Unbelievers are loth to yield themselves up as Men out of Christ: To do so, would be indeed to put the Rope about their Necks, to lay their Heads down upon the Block: On the other Hand, there is sometimes even in the Children of God a wayward frowardness of Heart, that tho' they have Light whereby they discern Christ is in them, yet they refuse it, are unwilling to entertain that comfortable discovery that God letteth

letteth in. I say therefore the Case is *rare*, and seldom falleth out, when there is a conscientious Examining a Mans self: Yet because it is a very common *complaint*, give me leave to speak to it. And supposing that be the Case with thee, that upon Self-Examination thou art *utterly in the dark, and unresolved, whether Christ be in thee, yea, or no*; thy Duty lyeth in these things.

1. Be convinced, and settle those Convictions on thy Heart, *that there is a certain possibility, and a great and weighty necessity of getting out of this Condition*, and bringing Matters between thy Soul and God, in the Court of thy own Conscience to a determinate Issue and Resolution.

(1.) There is a *possibility* of arriving at a certainty. God *can* shine in upon thy Heart, even thy Heart, as dark as it is; he can Establish it in Assurance and Peace, as unbelieving and full of Anguish as it is: He *hath* done so for some, for many others, and *that* in the diligent use of ordinary means. There was one that was of the weaker Sex, she long cryed out in darkness and distress, I am a forlorn forsaken Woman, my Soul is in a Wilderness of woe; but yet the end that God made with her was comfortable: She could afterwards say, he is come with Joy unspeakable and glorious, he doth Embrace my Soul in everlasting Mercy; this I *know*, this I *know*, as sure as God is God. Now that which *others* have attained, should be convincing of a *possibility* that *you* also may attain it. Again, it is the *Duty* of thy Conscience to speak, and to speak positively and peremptorily within thee, touching

touching thy State : And Conscience hath a *natural Ability* to discern what is within : *The Spirit of Man is the Candle of the Lord, searching all the inward Parts of the Belly, Prov. 20. 27.* And much more when Conscience is *sanctified* and *enlightned*, and under the Conduct of a Principle and Spirit of Grace, it is able to bear Witness in the Holy Ghost, concerning a Mans Spiritual Estate. Moreover, it is not only the Work and Office of Conscience, but it is the Work and Office of the *Holy Ghost* himself, for the Elect of God : While they are *out of Christ*, he is to be to them a Reprover, a Spirit of Conviction ; and when once they are *in Christ*, his Work then is signified by his Name the *Comforter*, it is his Work then to *bear Witness with their Spirits that they are the Children of God, Rom. 8. 16.* It is his Work then to shew them *the Things that are freely given them of God* : Namely, Faith and Christ, *1 Cor. 2. 12.* Yea, it is his Office to *fill them with all Joy and Peace in beleiving, that they may abound in Hope through his own Power, Rom. 15. 13.* It is his Work to *Seal them unto the Day of Redemption, Eph. 1. 13. & 4. 30.* In that *sealing* them, there is an Allusion to the manner that was in usage in those Places and Times when Men did purchase Cattel, yea, when Men did purchase Men to be their Servants, it was usual to set a *Seal* upon them ; there is an Allusion to that usage. In sealing, there is the *nature* of sealing, which is to make an Impression ; and there is the *Use* and *end* of it, which is to *distinguish, assure,* and *appropriate* : So the Holy Spirits sealing them to the Day of Redemption, is nothing else but his making such *Impressions* of Grace
and

and Life upon the Soul, as are indeed *appropriating Evidences*, making it out that *that* Soul belongs to Christ. Now this being the Work of the *Holy Ghost* himself, there is a *certain possibility* that you may be made Partakers of it ; and of that you should be convinced, you should inculcate it upon your selves, I may attain it as well as other Christians.

(2.) And as there is a possibility, so there is an urgent and weighty *necessity*, that you get out of this dark Condition, wherein you know not whether you are going to Heaven or to Hell. It is an *unserviceable* Condition : Thy Soul cannot be *fruitful* as long as it remaineth in this Case ; you can indeed perform no Duty to God with such a filial love, and such an Evangelical Spirit as you should do, you cannot go to him, cannot serve him, cannot walk before him as a Child before a Father : Besides, this weakeneth, straiteneth, and shutteth up thy Heart, dampeth thy love, hindereth thee from being fruitful to the Praise of God. *David* intimateth that he knew this well, when he prayeth, *Psal. 51. 12, 13. Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation ; what then ? Then will I teach Transgressors thy way, and Sinners shall be converted unto thee ;* he found himself not in Case to Act for God, until the Joy of Gods Salvation was restored to him. Whilst thou art in this dark Condition, thou art like a Man whose *Bones are broken* (so *David* expressed his Case, *Psal. 51. 8.*) and he whose Bones are broken is in ill Condition, either to work or run. And as you can do little or nothing for God, as it is unserviceable to God, so it is likewise *uncomfortable* to your selves : You have

no relief against all your fears and sorrows, but only so far as you have comfortable hopes that you are in Christ ; to releive thy self either by diversion, or fencelesness, or slighting of thy fears and troubles, is but like a Dose of *Opium* for the Tooth-ach, which layeth the Patient in a deadly slumber.

And as it is uncomfortable to thee, so it is likewise *unsafe and dangerous* : Thou standest upon the Precipice, upon the very brink of the Pit, thou art upon the vertical Point turning for Life or Death, you are now set in that Condition, wherein you must expect that the Great God will make a quick dispatch with your Soul: If his Sovereign Grace do not prevail, do not Triumph over thy guilt and Sin, he will then quickly Seal thee up under incorrigible hardness and dedolency. Yea, it is unsafe on *this* account, lest you should swallow down your fears, lest being frequently Conversant with such Thoughts of the doubtfulness of thy Condition, thy Heart should grow into a despising of it yet more and more.

Yea, let me add in the last Place, it is a *sinful, guilty Condition*, to live in the dark without Assurance. Thou livest in Sin, while thou livest in the dark about the State of thy Soul: Do not stumble at it, I make it out thus ; it is the *Duty* of thy *Conscience*, it is that which is *bound* upon it by God, to tell thee how it is with thee, and to declare unto thee thy own State, thy spiritual State: Now if thy Conscience keep silence about it, if thy Conscience do not speak out, or speak home, and tell thee in the Name and Majesty of God how it is with thee, thy Conscience faileth in that

that Duty that is bound upon it ; thou livest therefore in Sin, whilst thou livest in darkness. I know it may be a Sin of *Infirmity*, and therefore doth not determine the State of the Person to be *Evil* : But when it is *indulged*, when the Soul is contented to be in the dark, then it speaketh sadly. You should *impress these Convictions* on your selves ; that there is a *possibility*, and there is a *necessity* of getting into another posture.

2. You may, and should conclude there is *somewhat much amiss* between God and you. If upon Self-Examination, you are not able to know that Christ is in you, you are then Reprobates as the Apostle here saith : By which he doth not mean that you are cast-aways in the Purpose, Counsel, and Decree of God, but he meaneth *disapproved* Persons, in whom there is *that* which is disallowed of God, there is *that* in you before God, which is *Sin*, and matter of *shame* unto you : And *this* you ought to *conclude*, if you be in the dark about your Condition, after you have Examined your selves.

But you may say, *How shall I do to find out what it is that is amiss between God and me*, when upon Examining of my Self, I am not able to come to a Resolution, whether Christ be in me, yea, or no ? I Answer briefly in Two Words.

1. It may be, thy State is bad. And God seeth this, but thou wouldst fain be getting Peace into thy Conscience, wouldest fain be daubing with untempered Mortar, and building up a building of Joy and Comfort to thy Self without a *Foundation*. If it be so, it is the

Faithfulness and Mercy of God towards thee, that he will not let it be, but he bloweth upon all thy attempts and strivings at it ; and if the Lord love thee, he will continue and go on in this way towards thee, till he hath made thee see that thy State is dangerous and damnable, and till he hath changed thee, and brought thee into another State.

2. Suppose your State be good, as it is possible it may, and yet upon Self-Examination you are in the dark, how it is with you ; then you should conclude that there is a *Distemper*, and Malady lying upon you which you are born down by, and under the Power of.

If you ask wherein lyeth that Malady ?

I Answer, it lies in one of these Four Things.

1. May be, it is in the *weakness of thy Faith in Gods Word*. Thy Heart secretly staggereth at what the Word of God declareth, concerning the happiness and high Priviledge of those that have Christ. When the Angel came to *Mary*, and told her she should bear a Son, her Faith staggered at it, *how shall this be, seeing I know not a Man ? Luke 1. 34.* When God in his Word telleth you what great things he hath done for you, thy Faith secretly staggereth at it, how can these things be, that I should be in Christ and Christ in me, who have done such vile things against God ? You cannot think God can forgive such Sinners as you : But this is weakness of Faith to stagger at what the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken ; you should believe ; as the Angel said, *with God nothing shall be impossible.* Thy way and Duty is to strengthen thy Faith

in the Word of God, and to check thy self for those staggerings and Unbelief which thou findest thus hang about thee.

2. It may be, it is the *lowness of thy Grace*. There is (perhaps) the Root of the matter in thee, a *little spark* of Grace in that heart of thine; but alas, it is but a *little spark* in a great heap of Dung and Rubbish, and thence it is hard to be found and discerned: And from this weakness of Grace it often cometh to pass, that there is much unevenness in a Mans walk, unevenness either in the *Frame* of his Spirit, or in his *Conversation* and Practice; and either of them plungeth into *Guilt*, and so blindeth the *Conscience*, and maketh the Work of Grace lye under much *obscurity*. Thy way in that Case is, go mend thy Obedience, mend thy Grace, set thy self to *that* as thy proper Task and Duty: It will never be better with thee as to Assurance and Comfort, till it be better with thee as to Sanctification and new Obedience; the Failures and Breaches that thou makest with God, in thy walking before him, cause all this sad darkness, and doubting about thy State.

3. It may be from *dimness in the Eye of Conscience*, thy Conscience doth not, cannot discern, what God hath done for thy Soul, and what it may be, is in a good measure Evident unto others. And there is a *double dimness* upon the Eye of Conscience; sometimes it is touching the Work of Grace, which is *that* from which the Heart is to gather Assurance: Thence it is, that Souls sometimes mistake and wrong themselves, and wrong God too, they reckon that there is no *true Faith* without *Assurance*, they reckon there is no *true Grace*, un-

less it be in *such and such* a Victorious and conquering *Measure*: Now this is a mistake concerning the *Rule*, it is an Error in the *Principle*, by which a Soul must try and Judge of it self. Sometimes the dimness of Conscience is not so much concerning the Rule, as concerning *what is wrought in a Mans own Soul*; he seeth not what God hath done for him, or what Grace God hath wrought in him, he seeth not the Conformity that is between the Work of God in his own Heart, and the Account given in the Word of God, concerning a Work of Grace. In this Case, thy way is to *clear up the Eye of Conscience*, look into the *Word*, look into thy own *Heart*, be more Conversant with both of them, and in *that way* thy Light will increase.

4. It may be, it is from some singular *unskilfulness in this Work of judging and concluding, concerning thy own Condition, and extricating thy self from those snares and mistakes that Satan casteth upon thee about it*. The Devil usually taketh *two ways* with those that are in Christ, when he can neither weaken their Faith, nor obscure their Grace, nor darken the Eye of their Conscience.

(1.) Sometimes he dealeth like a *Sophister* with them, exaggerating and *aggravating the remainders and workings of the Body of Death*, and representing the Spots of Gods Children as if they were Tokens of a graceless State, he aggravateth the workings of the Body of Death, and maketh them appear unto the Believer, as if they were the plain Tokens of a Christless, graceless Person. But this is a plain and manifest *deceit*; and the way to come from

from under it, is to clear up unto thy self, that these remainders of the Body of Death in thee, are but such as are common to the Children of God; the strength of the Devils Argument then is broken.

Now if you ask, How shall I know that they are but such as are common to the Children of God?

The Answer is obvious: If you allow them not, hate them, strive against them, fight against them, maintain a spiritual Warfare, and that with Gospel Weapons, in a Gospel Manner, with a Gospel Spirit; if you mourn under them, if they be the burthen of thy Heart, the bitterness of thy Life; if you fly unto the Fountain that is set open to wash in for Sin, and for uncleanness; if upon the account of them, the Blood and Grace of Christ be precious unto thee, esteemed by thee, repaired unto, and lived upon, for the cleansing of thee from these Sins? You may then conclude they are but the Spots of the Children of God.

(2.) Sometimes the Devil useth not so much Art and Craft as *Violence*: He impresseth such terrifying Thoughts and Suggestions as these upon the Minds of Gods Children; *I can't have Faith, I can't be in Christ*: And these Thoughts he hangeth upon them, haunteth them with; but he rendreth no reason, no not to the Conscience of the Believer himself, to make these suggestions appear true. Now in this Case, take a three fold Word of Advice.

1. Cite these fears that are impressed upon thee, Cite and Summon them unto the Bar of thy own Judgment, as enlightened by the Word of God. Say unto thy self, as David sometimes

sometimes doth, *Psal. 42. 1. 1. Why art thou cast down O my Soul?* Why should I fear there is no Faith in this Heart of mine, that this Soul of mine hath not Christ in it? Demand a *Reason* of your *Fear* as well as of your *Hopes*. If you should be followed with Thoughts that things are *well* with you, that you are in Christ, that your Sins are pardoned, would it not be your Duty to call those comfortable suggestions to an account, and say, how can I make it appear, how can this be made out, it is the Lord that is my Judge, and what doth he say in his Word? Do so by your *Fears* as well as by your *Hopes*; and you will ordinarily find that in calling them thus to account, citing and summoning them to the Bar of thy own Judgment, enlightned by the Word of God, they will Vanish and disappear.

2. These groundless fears are to be *rejected and trampled upon*. When the Case hath been decided, and that at the Bar of God, and determined by the Word of God and the Light thereof, and the Spirit of God; then to have these fears importunately suggesting, and haunting thee, and hanging upon thee, this is certainly from Satans Hand, from his Malice. You should therefore deal with them, as you would do with other suggestions from Hell; shut the Door against them, give that Answer to them and abide by it, *the matter hath been cleared, this Question put out of Question*, and this great Controversie hath been decided, and determined by the Word and Spirit of God, therefore I will hear no more calling of it into Question.

3. This

3. This is a call unto thee, to be *be convinced of thy need of the Holy Ghost*, and call in his Help: For by this you see you are no more able to *Establish* your own Souls in *Comfort* and *Assurance*, than you were able to *quicken and Convert* them; you need the Power of the Holy Ghost to be put forth in order to *Consolation*, as well as in order to *Conversion*; and you find by Experience, that if the *Comforter* who should relieve your Souls be far off, all other relievers, all other Comforters are but miserable Comforters, and appear to be of no Value. Satan and Unbelief, anguish and doubtfulness of Heart, will be too hard for you, unless the Holy Ghost come and *bear witness with thy Spirit, that thou art a Child of God*, that thou hast Faith, and that Christ is in thee. Therefore, being haunted with these fears without Ground, you should look upon it as a call from Heaven unto you, to call down the Spirit of God, as the Spirit of Assurance and Consolation; and it is he, and he *alone* that can vanquish thy fears, and Establish thee in Peace, and settle thee in a lasting and Triumphant Assurance, after all thy Conflicts and Doubts about it.

S E R.

S E R M O N. IX.

2 CO R. XIII. 5.

Examine your selves, whether ye be in the Faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates?

THE main Thing in mine Eye when I pitched upon these Words, was some Practical Directions with Reference unto Self-Examination. I broke through my Method unto them, in somewhat a preposterous manner, and have finished what I designed on them. Give me leave now to go back, and speak a little further to the First Doctrine, and so proceed unto the others.

Doct. I. *Self-Examination is a Duty which Christians should be found in the Practice of.*

I have formerly opened the Nature of it. That which is now before me, is the Second General Head; *To demonstrate or prove the Doctrine.* And methinks I should not need to say much to convince your Consciences of it; that Conscience must needs be very much under the Power of Darkness which will not subscribe to this

this Truth, That it is a Duty which belongeth to me to examine my self, to prove my self: Ay, it is a Duty which is engraven upon the Consciences of Persons as deeply, as clearly as any other Duty whatsoever; yet I will mention a few things for further clearing it.

1. It must unavoidably *either be a Duty to examine our selves; or else examining our selves is a Sin, or a thing indifferent*: But now examining our selves cannot be either a Sin, or a thing indifferent; there is no Man's Conscience that can be under such a Delusion as to conclude it would be a Sin for him to reflect upon himself, review his own ways, and consider the State and Terms in which he stands with God: Neither can it be a thing indifferent; for if it were, Conscience would be left at Liberty concerning it, if a Man might do it, or not do it, without Approval or Disapproval from God: Therefore it must be a Duty.

2. *God hath planted a Conscience in every Man, and it is the proper and genuine Office and Work of Conscience to examine a Man's self.* No Creature therefore, but a Creature that is void of a Conscience, but must needs be under this as a Bounden Duty. It is *so* the native and genuine Work of Conscience, as that he who hath a Conscience planted in him, must needs be obliged to it; Conscience must be in vain else, if Men were not bound to examine themselves. Conscience hath an *Ability* for this Work, an *Aptness* in its Nature for it, *Prov. 20. 27. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord*: But what is the Work and Office of this Candle? It is *to search all the inward parts of the belly.* To reflect and search, *that is the native*

tive Work of Conscience. It is planted in all, The Heathens themselves had *their Conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts either accusing or else excusing them*; and this was from the work of the law written in their hearts, Rom. 2. 15. It is the Saying of a *Heathen*, "There is a secret Spirit residing within us (*he meaneth Conscience*) who doth observe and record all our Good or Evil; and as we treat him, as we carry it to him, so doth he treat us. So spake a Heathen from what he saw and felt in himself. There is *no Act of Self-examination* but Conscience hath an Ability and Aptness by its Nature thereunto: Conscience can *discern the Rule, i. e. the Will and Mind of God*; Conscience can *reflect and compare* a Man's own Way and Frame with that Rule; Conscience can discern our *agreeing or disagreeing* with it; Conscience hath an Ability to *pass a Judgment* upon our selves, and speak within us what is the Judgment of God concerning us on the Account thereof. Now if every Man be endued with a Conscience, and this Conscience be in its Nature apt and able for this Work of Self-examination, it thence appeareth that Self-examination is a Duty.

3. *The Spirit of God putteth Men upon it.* He doth so actively, he moveth Mens Hearts unto it: *Blind Heathens* themselves are not, cannot be wholly without such Motions from God; their *thoughts will and do accuse or excuse them*, and this is from the work of the law written in their hearts, as the Apostle hath it in that fore-mentioned Scripture, Rom. 2. 15. But those that live under the Dispensation of the Word, and Ministry of the Gospel, are much more

put

put upon it by the Spirit of God to examine themselves. As to the Truth of *this*, I believe I need go no further than to that Witness which God hath within all your Bosoms. The Spirit of God hath sometimes put you upon this Duty, more or less. *Felix*, when he was under *Paul's reasoning about Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment*, he was put upon Self-examination and Self-reflection, for *he trembled, Acts 24. 25.* his Conscience wrought so strongly as to stir up trembling in his Heart. The *Pharisees* and *Chief Priests* were blind enough, bad enough, and obstinate enough, yet their Consciences were awakened and set on work to reflect upon themselves and their own Way and Condition, under Christ's preaching a Parable, *Matth. 21. 45.* *They perceived within themselves, that he spake that Parable against them.* And the Apostle telleth us it is ordinary, under the Dispensation of the Word in the Ministry of the Church, that *unbelievers and unlearned come in, and are convinced of all, and judged of all, and the secrets of their hearts are made manifest, 1 Cor. 14. 24, 25.* The Word of God is (and it is so most eminently in the Ministry and Dispensation of it) *quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and is a searcher, and discerner, and judger of the secret thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. 4. 12.* Now that which God by his Spirit working in the Word moveth Men unto, and putteth Men upon, must needs be a Duty; but thus he moveth and putteth them upon Self-examination.

God

4. *God in his Word giveth Direction and Light about it.* Now that which God giveth Direction about, as to the manner of discharging it, is a Duty; for that very thing, *giving Direction about it*, is an Approval of it, and an Injunction to practise it. *Matth. 6.* Christ giveth Direction about *Alms-giving, Prayer, and Fasting*: This is a plain and undeniable Proof that these are Duties; else God in speaking of them would have condemn'd them, would not have given Directions how to do them. In like manner, I argue as to this of *Self-examination*; God giveth us Directions about it, how to do it; *that sheweth he approveth it, and expecteth we should be found in the Practice of it.* This Text giveth Direction about it; it must be done *earnestly*, we must make thorough Work of it; it giveth Direction as to *one special thing* we must examine our selves about, *whether we be in the Faith? whether Christ be in us?* And elsewhere in Scripture God giveth other Directions, with reference thereunto.

5. *There are Duties commanded us by God, and Dispensations of Providence* which God walketh in towards us, which do call us to *Self-examination*, and oblige us to it. There are Duties enjoined us by God which oblige and call us to examining our selves: For we can never discharge *those* Duties without doing *this*. We are commanded to *make our Calling and Election sure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10. This can never be done without examining our selves. It is a Duty enjoined upon all the Disciples of Christ, that they should *receive and partake in the Supper of the Lord*. This cannot be done aright, without examining our selves, 1 Cor. 11. 28. Let

a man

a man examine himself, and so let him eat. It is a Duty to reform and humble our selves under our Sins and Miscarriages : This cannot be done without examining our selves. Therefore saith the Church, *Lam. 3. 40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies : I made hast, and delayed not to keep thy commandments,* saith the Psalmist, *Pf. 119. 59, 60.* Without considering or thinking on his Ways (which is Self-examination) he had never done it. It is a Duty to own, to be thankful for, and bless God on the account of any good thing wrought in us, or done by us : This we can never do without examining our selves ; *Gal. 6. 4. Let every man, saith the Apostle, prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another.* Innumerable are the Duties peremptorily and flatly enjoined us, which can never be done without Self-examination.

There are also *Dispensations of Providence*, whereof this is the Voice ; God in them calleth us to examine our selves. He bringeth us under *Adversity and Affliction* ; What is the Language of that ? *In the day of adversity consider,* *Eccles. 7. 14.* The Rod hath its Voice ; *Mic. 6. 9.* and the man of wisdom will hear : But this is always the Voice of the Rod ; it is one thing which it speaketh, that we should consider our ways, consider in what Terms we stand with God. God laid them under a Rebuke, *Hag. 1. 5, 6, &c.* But what was the Language of that Providence ? *Consider your ways,* saith God. God blasted them in every Work of their Hands, brought them under Disappointments and

and Consumptions: It was a Call from Heaven to them, to examine themselves. There is one Dispensation of Providence, wherein God cometh forth to all the Children of Men, and we all know it, and that is *Death*: We can never sanctifie God therein, or be in Case and Readiness to meet God, and go forth unto him in that Dispensation of Providence, unless we do examine our selves, and clear up Matters between God and us in our own Consciences.

Give me leave to speak a little of the *Second Doctrine*, and I will make a brief *Application* of them both together.

Doct. II. *That Christians should be earnest in, and should make thorough Work of Self-examination.*

There are Two things which I will briefly speak unto.

I. *Wherein lies this Thoroughness* in examining our selves; when doth a Christian indeed make *thorough Work* of it?

II. The *Reasons* of the Point, How it doth appear that this is our Duty to be thus earnest in it.

I. *Wherein lies this Thoroughness* in examining our selves? There are several things that concur to make it up.

1. *We must be often at it.* For it is a Work of such a Nature, as we can never be duly thorough in it; our Work herein will never be perfect, unless we be at it *again and again*. The Apostle implieth this in his Expression in the

the Text, *Examine your selves* saith he, whether ye be in the Faith or no. They might say, we have done so. Ay, but saith he, *to it again; prove your own selves.*

2. We should not only be often at it, but *we must be earnest in it.* We cannot make thorough Work of it else; we must bend and buckle our Mind and Strength, the intensness of our Spirits, to this Work of Self-Examination: A passing glance, a transient vanishing Reflection is not *thorough* Self-Examination. Self-Examination is called a *communing* with our own Hearts, *Psal. 4. 4. Commune with your own Hearts and be still, Psal. 77. 6. I commune with my own Heart, and my Spirit made diligent search.* You do not account you *commune* with a Man, if you give him a passing Word, a Salutation, or a how-do-you as you pass: No, communing implieth many Questions put, many demands made, and Answers given, and replies returned to those Answers; it implieth a multiplied conferring with a Mans Self, with Thought upon Thought, Reflection upon Reflection: And there is no thorough Self-Examination, without this *multiplying* our Thoughts about our selves, and about our Duty, and about the Judgment of God concerning us.

3. When the inquiries that are in a Mans Heart are brought *unto an Issue, unto a Conclusion, and a positive peremptory Judgment.* This is also another thing required in Self-Examination. To ask, and have no Answer; to demand, and inquire, and have no reply; or if thy Conscience do reply unto many Questions, yet if there be no *sentence* given, no Judgment

ment past, a Man falleth short in this Work of Examining himself: Yea, tho' there be a Sentence past and Judgment given, yet if that Sentence be not engraven, and stand upon record before the Eyes of Conscience, as with a Pen of Iron in a Rock for ever, thy Examining thy Self is shallow and slight. You should make such *perfect work* of it, as to have the result and issue arrived at in Examining your selves to remain; I say, to remain and abide with you still. It is the desperate folly and treachery of unawakened Sinners, that their Consciences sometimes do reflect upon, and tell them of such and such Guilt, but they forget, and turn aside from under it, it vanishes and is gone: It is much the same thing in some Believers, that when they Examine themselves, they, it may be, see themselves *guilty*, or it may be, see some *good* thing that *bath Salvation accompanying it* wrought in them, but they forget what they have seen and discovered, it doth not remain upon record before their Consciences: The Apostle *James* telleth us of some foolish, forgetful hearers, whom he compareth to a Man who *beholdeth his natural Face in a Glasse, and goeth his way and forgetteth what manner of Man he was*. So it is with them who view themselves in the Glasse of the Word, but go away and forget what manner of Men they are: This is not to make thorough Work of it.

4. Thorough Work is not made in Self-Examination, unless *Doubts, and Disputes be cleared up and silenced, until all Suspensions and Suggestions to the contrary, be vanished and born down*. As in a graceless Persons Examining himself,

himself, his Conscience it may be, may suggest and whisper, nay, possibly it may speak plain, and speak out that his State is bad: But now if a guilful Heart suggest other Thoughts, and he entertain them, he maketh not thorough Work in Examining himself. It is so with a Believer, he Examineeth himself and seeth a Token for good, an Evidence that he is in Christ; but yet the Jealousie, and Suspicion, and Unbelief of his Heart suggesteth the contrary: Unless these contrary Suggestions be born down and silenced, there is not thorough Work made in Self-Examination. Sometimes a Child of God examineeth himself, and seeth such and such Corruptions much unmortified and indulged appearing in his Life and Practice, or such and such defects in his Grace; but a guilful Heart flattereth him that things are better with him than indeed they are: Unless these contrary Suggestions be born down by Convictions, there is no thorough Work made in Self-Examination. Self-Examination if it be carried on to the Perfection it should be, it would make matters as clear before the Eye of Conscience, as if they were written with the Sun-Beams. Look as when a Sinner out of Christ is convinced of his cursed Estate, his *Convictions* should be so clear, so strong, as that he should no more be able to doubt of his being in a State of Damnation, than he is to doubt of his own being: So on the other Hand in a Child of God, the Satisfaction of his Conscience concerning his being in Christ, should be so clear, mighty and overbearing, as that he should not be able to doubt thereof. Unless you bring Matters

on to such an Issue as this, you are flighty, you are defective in your Examining your selves.

5. The thoroughness of Self-Examination lyeth in this, *That the Heart be impressed and influenced, according to the discovery and Conviction that the Conscience hath.* For tho' Self-Examination be properly the Work of Conscience, yet Conscience worketh weakly, and with a feeble Hand in Examining a Mans Self, unless the Heart have mighty Impressions made upon it by Conscience. If the Verdict that Conscience giveth, and the Judgment it brings in about a Mans Way, his Terms with God, or his State, be bad, and against a Man; it should be a greivous and wounding thing unto the Heart: And if the Heart be not wounded thereby, and set a bleeding, there is ordinarily some defectiveness in Conscience's speaking, there is some darkness, or some dimness, some sleepiness in Conscience. So on the other Hand, if the Judgment that Conscience bringeth in be for a Man, it should fill the Soul with a sweet rejoycing and enlarged thankfulness: *Being justified by Faith, and having Peace with God, the Soul should rejoyce in hope, and Joy in God, and Glory in Tribulation;* as the Apostle speaks, *Rom. 5. 1, 2, 3, 11.* If the Testimony of a Mans Conscience be good, and for his sincerity, it's Matter of rejoycing, *2 Cor. 1. 12.* *This is our rejoycing, even the Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity by the Grace of God we have had our Conversation in the World.*

II. *The Reasons of the Doctrine, to make it appear that it is a Duty to be thus Torough in Examining our selves.*

1. Self-

1. Self-Examination is a difficult Work, we must therefore be earnest in it. There is a great deal of difficulty in discharging it aright; partly because of *Satans* opposition, who is an Enemy to our Examining our selves, as well as he is to any other Duty: And it is partly from our own *Hearts*. They are full of *blindness*; it is a Laborious Work for a blind Mind to search the deep dark Corners of the Heart. There is a great deal of *Guile* and deceit in our Hearts, they are *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, *Jer. 17. 9*. It is a difficult Work to search a desperately deceitful and wicked Heart, so deceitful and wicked that none but God thoroughly knoweth it. There is an *Aversion* and backwardness in our Hearts, to appear before the Face of our own Consciences, there is an *Aversion* in them to submit unto, and undergo this scrutiny and Self-Examination by our own Thoughts; hence they will play many a slippery, and many a treacherous Prank when we are engaged in this Work. All this bespeaketh our Diligence, and verily we should not deal with a slack Hand, when we are dealing with our selves in a Work which our own Hearts do render so difficult.

2. There is very much dependeth upon the right, and due discharge of this Duty of Self-Examination. Convictions and Comfort do very much depend thereon; consequently either Conversion, or abiding in an unregenerate Estate; because Conversion begins in Conviction; and Conviction cannot be attained without Self-Examination. When God would Convict the Soul, this is his way always, he maketh him

go down into himself, and reflect upon his own ways. On the other Hand, if a Man be in Christ, his Assurance and Comfort dependeth much upon his Examining himself: For without it, he can never know that Christ is in him; a Man may be in a golden Dream, and never have it discovered to be so, unless he Examine himself; such a Dream as the Church of *Laodicea* was in, who said they were rich, and increased with Goods, and had need of nothing, when they were wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. 3. 17. On the other Hand, one in Christ may be bowed down under fears and Bondage, and Accusations by Satan, yea, Satan may get into his Conscience, and fill him with Self-Condemnations, when Conscience should speak Peace unto him: And all this for want of a right and thorough Examining himself.

3. *It is easie, but yet it is dreadful to be deceived about a Mans Self, therefore we should be Diligent, and thorough in examining our selves. It is easie to be deceived: Our carnal Self-love and Self-flattery which is in us, and which is Natural to us, betrayeth us unto Self-deceivings: Self-deceivings are common, and the Reason thereof is because of our slightness in Self-Examination. As it is an easie thing to be deceived, so it is a dreadful thing to be deceived: Suppose (which is the best that can be supposed) that a Man be in Christ, if he is deceived about his own State, and think he is not in Christ, this is a sad and dreadful thing; for thou dost give Credit to the Devil, the Father of lies, thou grieveest the Spirit, disownest the Grace of God and his Work in thee;*

thee, and what he hath done for thee; thy Heart is restrained, and shut up as to Thankfulness, and those Praises which it should render unto God; you walk not unto his Honour, you glorifie not his Grace, you adorn not the Gospel you profess: There is a great deal of dreadful Evil in being mistaken, though it be on that hand which is the less dangerous of the two. But if the Mistake lie on the other hand, that thou art in the Flesh, and not in Christ, in Unbelief, and not in the Faith; and if you think you have Faith, what a dreadful thing is that? Thou contradicest the Word of God, and givest *that* the Lye; thou hardenest thy self in a damnable Condition, and these Delusions which you nourish through want of Self-examination, are like to be everlasting, (tho' at present invisible) Chains upon you, binding you down unto the Judgment of the Great Day.

I would make some *Application* of the Doctrines, putting them thus both together.

1. If Self-examination and Thoroughness in it be a Duty, hence we may see, *That there is both Evil and Danger in Things which it may be we count not so.*

(1.) There is Evil and Danger *in a sleepy Frame of Conscience.* If thy Conscience be not quick, lively, and awakened, thou art in an evil Case, thou art in a sinful Frame, thou canst never perform this Duty of Self-examination. Now that which hindreth a Man from performing a necessary Duty, which lyeth before him, must needs be evil.

(2.) Hence it appears that a *Surcharge of worldly Business is an evil Snare upon the Sons of Men*. Nay, it is so (and it is much to be lamented that it is so) unto many of them that are the *Sons of God*. It is the common Thought of Men, that if they have much Business in the World, in the way of their Employment and Calling, it is a Mercy to them; and it is true, the most serviceable Life is the most comfortable, if a Man have Grace to manage it aright; Yet on the other hand, it is sadly true, that the Business of the World proveth a Snare and Hindrance unto many; and herein (among other things) is the Snare and Mischief of it, it hindreth them from examining themselves, they cannot find time, or lend their Eyes to go down into their own Hearts, and review their own *Frame and Way*, and what hath *pass'd between God and them*, and in what *Terms* they stand; they live in a perpetual Hurry. But thou shouldest know and remember, that *that* Employment is sent unto thee as a Curse, which proveth such a Hindrance to thy Duty, and such a Snare and Prejudice unto thy Self-Examination.

(3, Hence *vain Company is an evil and hurtful thing*. Why so? Because it hindreth Mens Discharge of this Duty of examining themselves. Some are of such *empty Spirits* (as I may say) and there is so much Guilt upon them, that they know not how to be *alone*, know not how to employ their Time between God and their own Souls; and hence, what Time can be spared from the Occasions and Business of their Place, is spent in vain Converse, impertinent Visits, and the like. In the
great

great Day of Accounts there is many a Soul, ay, many a *Professor*, will see they have Cause bitterly to lament this their way, and their Neglect of Self-examination occasioned thereby. Great and Populous Places prove oftentimes a great Snare: I wish that Men of Business could approve their Sincerity to God in those Words of the *Psalmist*, *Psal. 26. 4. 5. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers: I have bated the congregation of evil-doers, and will not sit with the wicked.* There is a great deal of precious Time mispent in idle Converse, in defiling Converse, in Houses of Publick Resort; and Self-examination, and Mens own Souls are sadly neglected thereby.

2. *Let it stir us up, and engage us all to make Conscience of, and to Practise this Duty of Examining our selves.* You see it is a Duty, make conscience of it: It is a Duty you should be *thorough* in; do not therefore make conscience only of doing it, in a slighty, superficial, perfunctory manner, but be *serious*, be *thorough* in it. There are, among others, two *Excuses* that are common. I want *Time* for it, saith one; I want *Skill* for it, saith another.

As to want of *Time* and *Leisure*, it is a strange thing that any ones Conscience should by such an Allegation be satisfied. If you have not Time for necessary Duty, what have you Time for? Have you Time to save your Souls, to make your *Calling and Election sure*? You must then have Time for Self-examination. What are you in the World for, and have been continued in it, and have Means, and Ordinances, and Life vouchsafed to you, if you

you know not how Things stand between God and you, and what End God will make with you at last? Have you not Time for *this*? Redeem Time for it, redeem it from *other Occasions*, from *other Business*; redeem it from the *Necessities of Nature*, rather than want Time wholly for it. But you that plead want of Time, do but call your selves to an Account concerning your *mispence* of Time; you lay out so much Time every Day unprofitably and unfruitfully, which if it were reserved for, and employed in Self-examination, it would be better for your Soul.

Others alledge they want *Skill* for this Work, and that it is a *difficult* Work: But so is *every* Work of a Christian's Practice. You may as truly alledge you want Skill for Secret Prayer, or Meditation. You want Skill to sanctifie God in every Duty and Ordinance, will you therefore neglect and cast them by? But whose *Fault* is it that you want Skill? It is not the Lord's, it is thine own; and thy Unskilfulness, through thine own Fault, is so far from being an Excuse, that it is an Aggravation: You might have been skilled at it, had you *exercised* and *practised* it. Shall one that never prayed put off Prayer, and satisfie God and his own Conscience with this, I know not how to pray, I want Skill for it? Come, pray as you can. So here, examine thy self as thou canst; set about it, take it in hand, try what you can do; look up to God, beg of him to help thee, and if *he* be with thee in it, it will be carried on with some happy Success. Do it, I say, as you can; Skill and Ability will increase by Practice and Use; it is so in other things,

things, you will find it so in this: The more you neglect, the more unskilful will you be at it; the more you practise it, the more experienced and dexterous you will be in this thing. But the Bottom of the Business with most of us lieth here; we are not *willing* to come to it; our wily Hearts and guilty Consciences are loth to come to a thorough and strict Examination.

Some *Motives* I would leave with you, to engage your Hearts to this Duty.

1. *Convince your Consciences of it.* Convince them *thoroughly and fully*, that your Consciences may still say, *It is my Duty, I must do it*; it is my Debt, I must pay it, God demandeth it of me. Labour to take off the *Excuses* by which you would exempt your selves from it; see the Vanity and Folly of them, as those mentioned before, Want of *Time* and *Skill*. If our Consciences were brought under a thorough and strong Conviction, that this is a Duty, we should no more dare to neglect it, than to neglect keeping the Sabbath, hearing the Word, praying in Secret, or any other Duty.

2. *Consider what great need you stand in of the Practice of this Duty.* Things are in the dark (it may be) with thee, about thy Soul and the State thereof: If they be so, thou art the Man, thou art the Woman that needest to be earnest in examining thy self; for thou knowest not whither thou art going, whether to Heaven or Hell. It may be things are in the dark, as to thy *Frame*, whether Grace be lively and thriving, or whether thou art under sad Declensions, or no: Thou art the Man, verily, that art called upon from Heaven to examine thy

thy self. It may be things are *much amiss* between thee and God, thou hast taken many a wry Step, and hast never reflected thereon, never humbled and judged thy self : There are (it may be) Quarrels and Breaches never made up between thy Soul and God : Are not you the Persons that need to examine your selves ? May be you find there is *hardness* upon your Hearts ; you can by Strength of Memory (it may be) rip up some of the Miscarriages of your Lives, but it is with a senseless remorselessness of Heart : *Searching* the Length and Breadth of thy Sin, and reviewing it in the *Weight* thereof, would be the way to break thy Heart. May be thou art *unhumbled*, there is much of secret spiritual Pride in thee ; it is because thou examinest not thy self, lookest not back upon thy ways, goest not down into thy own Bosom ; Oh there would quickly appear humbling things, if you examined your selves. May be thou art *straitned* in Prayer, and hast little to say, you go every Day to God, but have little to say ; Self-examination would furnish thee with Matter of *Confession* and *Complaint*, and with Matter of *Supplication* ; thy Heart would be greatly enlarged to cry unto him, if you were more consciencious in the Practice of this Duty.

3. *Consider how much behind hand you are, as to this Duty.* Some of you (it may be) have neglected it *wholly*, never seriously examined your selves to this Day, never taken the Work in hand in a solemn manner. Others of you that have done it, yet how long was it before you would meddle with it ? how long did you live in the Neglect of it ? Like a wild Ass,
used

used to the Wilderiness, that snuffeth up the Wind at her pleasure, you were hurried from one Vanity to another, and never considered what you were doing, never pondered your own ways. And you that have examined your selves, and made conscience of it, how *defective* have you been in the Discharge of it, how defective, faulty, and flighty in it, how far short of bringing it up to the Issue spoken of? You are much behind hand, run deep in Arrears with God as to this Duty.

4. Consider the Advantage and Benefit of it. It is one way of seeking the Face of God; and God saith not unto the Seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain? All Commandments are for thy good, and he that commanded thee to examine thy self, he hath done it for thy good, it tendeth to thy good. It may be thou art much a *Stranger* at home, examining thy self would bring thee into much *acquaintance* with thy self. There are Remainders of *Corruption*, of Hardness of Heart, of Unbelief found in thee; Examining thy self would be a Means in the hand of the Spirit of Christ to pluck up those Evils by the Root, to heal those Maladies which thy Soul now labours under, and languisheth by. You have little *Acquaintance*, little *Communion* with God; examining your selves would help therein, if conscienciously discharged. There is a Spirit of *Unbelief* in thee, thy Heart setteth loose, and lieth out from Christ; Examine thy self more thoroughly, more frequently, it will at last lay you under this Conviction, that you must go out of your selves, and live upon him both for Righteousness and Strength; and to have thy Heart engaged to grow

grow up into Christ, and to live more fully and entirely upon his Fullness, is a most happy Attainment and blessed Duty. It cannot be reckoned what the Advantages and Benefits of a conscientious Performance of this Duty will be: There is many a Saint on Earth, many a glorified Saint in Heaven, that hath Cause to bless God, and will do so to those long and numberless Days of Eternity, for the Fruit they have reaped in a conscientious Discharge of this Duty of Examining themselves. Go you, and do likewise, and you shall reap like precious Fruit with them.

SERMON X.

2 COR. XIII. 5.

Examine your selves, whether ye be in the Faith, prove your own selves—

TH E Third Doctrine from these Words, was this,

Doct. III. *One special thing which Christians should examine themselves about, and make thorough Work of, is, Whether they be in the Faith, or no.*

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I do not say, this is the *only* Thing, or *all* the Business which we are to enquire after in our examining our selves ; no, there are *other* Matters also to come under our Search and Disquisition: We ought to examine our *Ways*, and reflect upon them, *what we have done*, Jer. 8. 6. We ought to reflect upon our General Course and *Conversation*; so the Apostle did, 2 Cor. 1. 12. For he saw, and was well assured, that *through the Grace of God he had his conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity*. We should examine our *Hearts*, and the *Way*, and *Frame* of them, Lam. 3. 40, 41. *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord: let us lift up our heart unto God*. But altho' there be many things that we should labour to know, by examining our selves, yet this is *one special thing*, *Whether we be in the Faith, or not? Whether Christ be in us?* This should come in among the rest, yea, it should have a *chief and principal Place*. We are commanded to *make our Calling and Election sure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10. which is all one in Sense with knowing whether we be in the Faith, and whether Christ be in us. Now if the *End* be required, the *Means* tending, and necessary to that End, are likewise enjoined: We are commanded in the 1 Pet. 3. 15. to *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear*. We can never be in a Readiness to render a Reason with *meekness and fear of the hope that is in us*, without examining our selves in order to the knowing *whether we be in the Faith, or not*.

There are Five things I would speak a little to in handling this Doctrine:

I. *The Meaning, and Reason, of this manner of Expression which the Apostle here useth, being in the Faith, and having Christ in us.*

II. *What is meant by Self here, when we say a Christian should Examine himself, in order to know whether Christ be in him.*

III. *Wherein lyeth, and is expressed, that earnestness and thoroughness in a Christians Examining himself in order to this.*

IV. *The Reasons of the Doctrine, Why a Christian should have this in his Eye, and upon his Heart, to know whether he be in the Faith, and whether Christ be in him.*

V. *Some Application of the Doctrine.*

I. *As to the Meaning and Reason of this Expression, being in the Faith, and having Christ in us.* The Intendment thereof is to denote a man's *Spiritual State* God-ward, whether he be in a *new Covenant-State*, a *State of Grace and Favour*, or not? Both the Expressions come to the same thing in the Issue. The one, that is, *being in the Faith*, is taken from the *Way and Means* of our coming into a *State of Favour*: The other, *our having Christ in us*, is taken from the *Root and Head* upon which we grow; and under whom we stand in the new Covenant, and by whom we are acted and influenced. So that they both speak the same thing; namely, our *Spiritual Estate* God-ward.

But to consider them severally.

I. *What is the Meaning and the Reason of that Expression, being in the Faith?* It is such a like Expression as the Apostle useth to set forth an unregenerate and natural State by, *Rom. 8. 8. they that are in the flesh*; and *Rom 7. 5. when we were in the flesh.* It is like that of *being*
in

in Sin : You shall die in your Sin, saith Christ to the Jews, *Joh. 8. 21, 24.* To be in the *Flesh*, and to be in *Sin*, speak a *natural* Condition ; to be in the *Faith* speaketh a *State of Grace*. It is not altogether unlike that Phrase of Speech we have in common use among us, when we say of a Man, *he is in a Passion* ; we mean by it not only that he hath *Passion* in him, that natural Affection of Anger ; but that it is in him so as to *act* him, it is in him as an *operative Principle*, it is in him in a predominate over-ruling manner. So when the Holy Ghost speaketh of a Christian's being *in the Faith*, it implieth the *Operativeness and Activity of the Spirit of Faith in him* ; that he hath not only a secret Seed of Faith in him, which lieth still, and doth not operate, but that he is acted and carried by the Spirit and Principle of Faith. You may observe (and it is very remarkable) this difference between those two Expressions which I compared together even now, *being in the Flesh*, and *being in the Faith* : Whoever hath *Faith* in him, he is *in the Faith* ; but we can't say, whoever hath *Flesh* in him, *he is in the Flesh* : There is no Believer but while he is in this World hath *Flesh* in him ; the Apostle found it so with himself, *sin that dwelleth in me*, saith he, *Rom. 7. 17.* But yet it could not be said of the Apostle then, that he was *in the Flesh* ; no, *that* had been his former Estate, but it was not his Estate then ; *when we were in the flesh*, saith the Apostle, *Rom. 7. 5.* Being *in the Flesh* was a State that was *past* ; tho' even then, when he was gotten out of that State he had *Flesh* in him : But now whoever hath *Faith* in him, is in the Faith. The Reason of this difference

ference is the difference which there is between the State of Nature and a State of Grace. The State of Nature is a *pure, unmixed, uncompound- ed* State, as I may say: Take a Man in his natural Estate, and there is nothing but Sin in him; Sin is in him, and he in it. While in his natural Estate there is *only* Flesh in him, and in him that is in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, *Rom. 7. 18.* And as to the *Terms* with God, in which he stands in his natural State, there is nothing but Curse and Wrath upon him. But now a State of Grace is a *mixed* State, if I may so express it; it is so in regard of the inward Principles of a moral Nature which a Christian hath in him. In a Convert, a Christian indeed, there is Spirit as well as Flesh; he is not all Spirit, no nor all Flesh, but they are both of them in him together, *Gal. 5. 17.* In the State of Glory he will be all Spirit; in the State of Nature he was all Flesh; but in the State of Grace, which is between both, he is made up of Flesh and Spirit. So this difference between the State of Nature, and the State of Grace, is the Reason of the different understanding of those two Expressions, *in the Flesh, and in the Faith.*

Now the Holy Ghost chooseth to speak thus, of *our being in the Faith*, rather than of *having Faith in us*, tho' both come to the same in the Issue: But the Apostle (I say) chooseth to word it thus; partly to intimate the *power and operativeness of the Principle and Spirit of Faith*; that if we have *any* Faith in us, we are then in it, we are *carried and acted* by it; and partly to intimate unto us the *Reference which Faith hath unto our new Covenant State.*

(1.) Faith is so *active and operative a Principle* as that where ever it is, the Man is carried by it; as a Man that is in a Vessel upon the Water is carried which way soever the Ship goeth; he is in the Ship, and therefore he is carried along with it. Faith is ordained of God to be a Conqueror in us: *Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world*, 1 Joh. 5. 4. Faith hath a time of Conflict indeed, it is ordained for it; but in its Conflict it cometh off a Victor at last; it is in this Regard stronger than the Principle of Corruption, than the Flesh, not in its own Nature simply, much less by any Help that we give; but through the Watchfulness and Influence of Christ upon us: the Influences from Christ unto Faith are like a Back of Steel to a Bow of Wood; tho' it be weak in it self, like a Grain of Mustard-Seed, yet through the Influences of Christ it abideth in Safety, and cometh off a final Conqueror. Now this *Strength* of Faith, through Christ, is intimated in that Expression, that we are *in the Faith*: It signifieth that Faith *carrieth* and *acteth* our Hearts, and that it is the *ruling Principle* in us.

(2.) The Holy Ghost useth this Form of Expression, of *being in the Faith*, to intimate the Reference which Faith hath unto the new Covenant-State. Our new Covenant-State is denominated from our Faith; there is no other Grace that the Holy Ghost makes use of to denominate our new Covenant-State by. It's true, our gracious *Frame* of Heart is denominated from other Graces, as *being in the Fear of the Lord*, or the like; but our State receiveth its Denomination from no other Grace but this of Faith.

Faith. We are never described as under the new Covenant from any other Grace, so as we are from this Grace of Faith. Other Graces are indeed the *Effects* and *Consequences* of our being under the Covenant of Grace; but Faith is the *Means* of our coming and being brought under that Covenant actually. So much for that Expression, *being in the Faith*.

2. The other Expression here in the Text, is, *having Christ in us*. *Know you not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates?* There is much of the Wisdom of the Holy Ghost in this Expression also. *Christ in us*, and *we in Christ*, come to the same in the Issue; they are *both* of them Expressions of our new Covenant-State, our Relation unto Christ as the Lord our Righteousness and Strength: But yet there is a difference between these Expressions of *our being in Christ*, and *Christ's being in us*. It's true, they always go together; if Christ be in us, we are in him; the *In-being* between Christ and Believers is *mutual*. You read it sometimes expressed by *Christ's being in us*, *Christ in you the Hope of Glory*; and so here in the Text, *Jesus Christ is in you*. Sometimes it is expressed by *our being in Christ*; *there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. 8. 1. and Rom. 16. 7. Paul speaks of some who were *in Christ* before him. Sometimes you have *both* joined together, *you in me, and I in you*, saith Christ, John 14. 20. *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him*, John 6. 5, 6. In like manner you read of *our dwelling in God*, and *God's dwelling in us*, 1 John 4. 12, 13. And as the *In-being* between Believers and Christ

Christ is thus *mutual*, so it is *inseparable*; they are always in Christ, in whom he is.

But why doth not the Apostle then say here in the Text, *Know ye not that ye are in Christ, except ye be reprobates*; but he rather chooseth to say, *Know ye not that Christ is in you*? There is this difference (which giveth you the Reason of it) between *Christ's* being in us, and *our* being in him: *Our being in Christ* is the next and immediate Ground of all *God's acting towards us*, and upon us, in a saving way; but *Christ's being in us* is the next and immediate Spring and Root of *our acting towards God* in a vital, gracious manner. Our being in Christ is the next and immediate Ground of *God's acting towards us* in a saving manner; our being in Christ by the *Design and Constitution of God*, and his Covenant with Christ, is the immediate Ground of *Christ's being sent to redeem us*, to die for us; and it is the immediate Ground of the *Spirit's being sent to convert us*, and to work Faith in us, and draw us unto Christ. And our being in Christ by *actual Implantation* is the proper and immediate Ground of our Acceptance with God, unto the Justification of Life, and of the Adoption of Sons, and of our Title unto Eternal Glory. But now *Christ's being in us* is the immediate Spring and Rise of *our acting* in a vital gracious manner towards God. We live, but whence is it that we live? It is not *we*, but it is *Christ liveth in us*, Gal. 2. 20. and that is one Reason why the Apostle useth this Expression, this Form of Speech, *whether Christ be in you*; because he would direct them unto the Spring and immediate Root of the *vital gracious working of their*

hearts unto God. Again, another Reason may be, because *Christ in us* is more sensible than our being in Christ: I speak of the Spiritual Senses. I say, Christ in us is more sensible than our being in Christ; it lieth nearer unto our Spiritual Senses, it is a thing more easily felt. Our being in Christ may be known, it may be collected and concluded from Christ's being in us; but Christ's being in us as a vital, operative Principle, is that which our Spiritual Sense may feel, as I may say: A Believer being made alive in a Spiritual manner, he hath withal a Spiritual Sense given him, by which he may feel Christ in himself. Now the Apostle here having in his Eye the directing of them about getting of Assurance concerning their Spiritual Good Estate, he chooseth to express himself thus, *whether Christ be in you*, because that is more sensible; and not *whether ye be in Christ*, tho' that be also inseperable from the other. So much shall suffice for the Opening the Meaning and the Reason of this Form of Speech, our being *in the Faith*, and having *Christ in us*.

II. *What is that Self which is to be examined?* Examine *your selves*, prove *your own selves*. I have opened this at large on the first Doctrine, when I shewed what is the Object of Self-examination in the General: I shall now consider it in order to *this End*, of knowing *whether Christ be in us*, and *whether we be in the Faith*: And so considered, there are Two things which come under this Name, this Term, *Self*, which is to be examined and searched into:

1. A Man's Way and Frame.

2. The former Transactions and Passages between his Soul and God. For under these Two are comprised all the infallible Signs and Evidences of Christ's being in us, and our being in the Faith.

1. A Man's Way and Frame.

(1.) The present *Way* that he walketh in. A Man's Way carrieth Tokens upon it, whether he be in the Faith or not, whether Christ be in him or not. *Rom. 8. 1. There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* A Man's walk discovers whether he be in Christ or not. As there is a walk whose end is Death and Destruction, *Rom. 6. 21. What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death;* there are many that walk (saith the Apostle, *Phil. 3. 19.*) so as that *their end is destruction*: So on the other hand, there is a Walk that doth betoken a blessed estate; *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord, they do no iniquity, Psal. 119. 1, 2, 3.* Now no Man can be blessed, but he that is in a State of Grace, and therefore in the Faith, and hath Christ in him. The Self then that is to be examined in order to know whether Christ be in a Man, One thing in it is a mans present Way.

(2.) It includeth also the present *Frame* of the heart. The frame of a mans heart is according to the Principles which are lodged and working in him; if the Principle be only Sin and Corruption, his heart is in an evil frame: If there be any thing of a Principle of Grace, his heart is, so far as that Principle

ruleth, in a gracious, sanctified frame. The frame of a mans heart, if it be holy and gracious, is an evidence of his being in the faith, and having Christ in him : Sanctification is a part of *Communion* with Christ ; and Communion with Christ infallibly argueth *Union* to him ; there is no other Root of Sanctifying Grace but Christ alone ; if a Man therefore be made Partaker of Sanctifying Grace, he must needs be ingrafted into Christ the Root of it. Look upon the Parts of Sanctification : Concerning *Mortification* the Apostle argueth so, *Rom. 6. 3. as many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death* : If we be grafted into Christ, which is the thing signified and sealed in Baptism, we have then Communion with him in his Death, as to the Virtue and Efficacy of it, for the Death of Sin ; for *that* the Apostle is there speaking of. And the same is no less evident and certain, concerning the other part of Sanctification, I mean *Vivification*, or being alive unto God. Christ is a Head of Life ; if therefore we be quickned, and made alive unto God, it is an undeniable Argument that we are united unto Christ.

2. *Former Passages and Transactions between the Soul and God.* The Psalmist, when he communed with his own heart, and his spirit made diligent search, he called to remembrance his song in the night ; he remembered former Passages between God and him, *Psal 77. 6.* A Christian may sometimes be in the dark, as to the *present Frame* of his Heart, and not be able to discern any certain Tokens there of his being in the Faith, and of Christ's being in him : But then his

his way is to call to remembrance, and review *former Passages* between him and God. Sometimes a Christian may possibly be in the dark, as to former Transactions; there may be a Cloud of Doubtfulness and Obscurity upon them, they may be much defaced; but if he can see Tokens for Good, of his being in the Faith, and Christ's being in him, in the *present* Frame of his Heart, he is not utterly without Light, without some Ground for knowing and concluding that his State is good. Sometimes a Christian may be at a Loss as to *both*: But that Soul, who, upon Self-examination hath his Conscience bringing in this Verdict, that there is neither in the *present Frame* of his Heart, nor in any *former Passages* between God and him, any certain Signs and Evidences of his being in the Faith, and of Christ's being in him; and if this Verdict of Conscience be true and certain, *that* Soul is bound in Conscience to pass this Judgment on himself, that he is not in Christ.

III. *Wherein consisteth this Earnestness and Thoroughness in Examining a Man's Self?*

I have spoken to it in the General formerly, I will now consider it only with respect unto this that is before us, *knowing whether a Man be in the Faith, and whether Christ be in him*: And a Christian doth thoroughly and earnestly examine himself,

I. *When he enquireth after the Sincerity of his own Way and Heart*; I mean the *gracious* and *evangelical* Sincerity of his Way and Heart. There is a *moral* Honesty, a *natural* Plainness in many a Heart; but this is no Evidence of Christ's

Christ's being in him. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, 2 Cor. 1. 12.* This gracious evangelical Sincerity can never be discerned, unless the Man look beyond the *out-side* of his Way, and examineth not only what he *doth*, but examineth and searcheth into the *Principles, Ends, and Manner* of his Actions: For if a Man do never so much, never so glorious and splendid things, if he do them not in a gracious and evangelical manner, his Conscience cannot with any good Ground bring in a Testimony to him of his Sincerity. There is nothing, as to the outward Act, that a Saint can do, but a Hypocrite may do it also; a Hypocrite that hath no Grace may have a *blazing Lamp* as well as a wise Virgin, *Matth. 25. 3.* a Hypocrite may *bestow all his Goods to feed the Poor, and may give his Body to be burned, 1 Cor. 13. 3.* It is therefore the *Gospel Sincerity* of a Man's Way and Heart in his Walking, which must be searched after by one that would make a diligent Search, in order to the knowing whether Christ be in him. Gospel-Sincerity lieth in the Conformity of a Man's acting, and frame unto the Gospel-Rule, or what the Gospel requires: Now the Gospel requires, that in all our Obedience we should fetch Strength from Christ, and after we have done all we should own our selves to be *unprofitable Servants*, look away from it all, cast it all by, as to the Standing of our Persons in a State of Justification.

2. *The Soundness of Conversion must be enquired after by him that is earnest in examining himself, in order to knowing whether Christ be in him* : I say, the Soundness of Conversion. There is a Necessity of *this*, because the first Estate, the Natural Estate, even of the Elect of God, is to be *in the Flesh* ; and there is a great Work of God passeth upon their Souls, in which they are translated from Death to Life, from Darkness to Light, they are cut off from the *first Adam* and ingrafted into the *second*. Now the Soundness of this Work upon the Soul, is *that* which he who is earnest and thorow in examining himself must look after. The Soundness of Conversion lieth chiefly in, or at least very much dependeth upon the *entireness* of it. If a Man's Heart be perfect with God in those Passages and Transactions wherein Conversion lies, he is then soundly converted ; but if there be a total want of any thing which is essential unto Conversion, whatever a Man hath, or seems to have, he cannot, he may not judge himself to be in Christ.

There are Three Things which are as so many Parts of Conversion, constitutive Parts of it ; without every one of them Conversion is unsound, the Heart is not entire, and perfect with God therein.

1. There is a divorcing and loosning of the Soul from Sin.

2. An emptying and unbottoming of the Soul from Self.

3. There is a drawing and determining of the Heart to Christ both for Righteousness and Life.

(1.) There

(1.) *There is a loofning and divorcing the Heart from Sin.* He therefore that would be thorow in examining himself, must enquire what of *that* hath pass'd upon him. Hath God made thee to see such an Evil, such a Hatefulness in Sin, as that thy Heart has been brought to give a Bill of Divorce unto it, unto every Sin, unto those Sins which thou wast most in league and love withal? If thy Heart be not sequestred from Sin, the League between thy Soul and Sin broken, there is no Conversion.

(2.) *Conversion hath in it an emptying and unbottoming of the Soul from Self.* When Men are convinced of Sin, they naturally turn in unto *themselves*; they have seen Sin to be their Death, their greatest Evil, and thence in the Blindness and Unbelief of their Hearts are ready to infer, that Amendment and New Obedience must be their greatest Good, must be their Life. But now in Conversion God emptieth the Soul of Self, he unbottoms it utterly from Self, he makes it see and feel, he convinceth it, and makes that Conviction take place upon the Soul, that it can live upon, and be saved by nothing in it self; all its Dependences, all its Hopes therefore are drawn off from Self, and all Things in Self.

(3.) *In Conversion the Heart is drawn to Christ.* There is an attractive Discovery of Christ made to the Soul, and there is the Hand of the Spirit of Faith upon the Heart, determining the Soul to draw in all its Dependences, and fix all its Hopes upon Christ, and upon Christ alone, all its Hopes both for Righteousness and Strength. That is the Language of the Heart of every Convert, which you
find,

find, *Isa 45, 24. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* The Heart of every Convert is determined by the Hand of God to say so; it is moulded and influenced thus to look unto Christ; He looketh to him, and unto him alone, to him, and to him entirely, both for Righteousness and Strength.

3. A Soul that is thorow and earnest in examining himself, labours to multiply *Evidences of his Sincerity and Conversion* before his own Eyes, and to get an *abundant and overpowering Satisfaction* concerning both. He doth not rest in languid Probabilities, or far-off Possibilities; but labours to see, and to see clearly his own Sincerity and Soundness; and to that end doth gather round about himself manifold and pregnant Demonstrations thereof. The Apostle, *2 Cor. 6. 3.* and following Verses, would prove to the *Corinthians*, that in all things he and others had approved themselves Ministers of Christ; and you see what a Catalogue of Instances he brings. To give you a closer Proof, *2 Cor. 7. 11.* the Apostle would evidence to the Consciences of the *Corinthians* the Sincerity and Soundness of their *Repentance*, that they had *sorrowed after a godly sort*: What Course doth he take? He pointeth them unto multiplied Evidences thereof; *Behold (saith he) what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of your selves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge; in all things ye have approved your selves to be sound and sincere in this matter of Repentance.* Just so doth the Soul deal with it self, when it is thorow and earnest in examining

examineng himself : Behold ! saith the Soul, here is *this*, and the other, a *third*, a *fourth*, and *fifth*, all Evidences of Soundness and Sincerity.

IV. Two *Reasons* I will offer why *this* should be in a Christian's Eye, and be pursued by him in his examining himself, namely, to know *whether he be in the Faith, and whether Christ be in him.*

1. *A Man's eternal Weal or Woe depends upon his being in the Faith, upon his being in Christ, and having Christ in him.* It shall go with a Man for ever, according as it is with him in this regard : If a Man be found in the Faith, it shall go well with him ; it is a Rule according to which the eternal Judgment shall proceed, *Mark 16. 16. He that believeth shall be saved ; yea, whatever he hath done, howsoever guilty, or vile he hath been, yet he that believeth shall be saved ; and on the other hand, he that believeth not, how few, how small soever his Sins may be, how high soever his Attainments, how great soever his Light, how splendid soever his Profession be, if he believeth not, he shall be damned. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel ; that is, on those who believe not, and they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, when he shall come to be admired in all them that believe, 2 Thess. 1. 7, 8, 9, 10. Unbelievers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, Rev. 21. 8.* So that eternal Weal or Woe depends upon a Man's being in the Faith, or not. So it doth

doth too upon his being found in Christ, or not. The Apostle, who was instructed and made wise of God unto Salvation, knew this, and therefore he tells us, that his great Solitude and Care was, that he might *be found in Christ, having Christ's righteousness, and not his own*, Phil. 3. 9. In the Day of Judgment there are *Books* which will be opened, Rev. 20. 12. What Books? The Books of Mens Consciences will be opened, and the Book of God's Omniscience, as to all that Men have done in the Body, will be opened; but among other Books there is a *Book of Life* will be opened, so you read there, *and another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life*, and that Book of Life is the *Lambs Book of Life*, Rev. 13. 8. it is so called; it is Christ's Book of Life; now in Christ's Book of Life are written down the Names of them that have Christ in them, and those that are in Christ, the Names of those that were drawn to Christ, and that closed with Christ for Righteousness. So that according to mens Union with Christ or not, will their eternal Doom and Sentence be: It is therefore of infinite Consequence and Moment, for a man to know whether Christ be in him.

2. *All solid Peace of Conscience* both here in this life, in all the passages of it, and at Death, depends upon a mans knowing that *Christ is in him*. It is true indeed, that Christ *without* us is the Object of our Hope, Trust and Confidence; it is him and him alone that we must commit our selves unto, and believe upon; but yet it is true, that Christ *without*, must be *within* us too, and we must be *in him*, if we would have a well-grounded Hope of Glory. *Christ in you the hope*
of

of Glory, Col. 1. 27. Christ without hath done all with God for us, he hath procured Life and Salvation, and eternal Glory for us, by what he hath done with God on our Behalf; but *that* which he hath done with God without us, must be *applied* unto us; if it be not *applied* unto us we have no ground of Confidence in our selves that it shall go well with us; Now where-ever Christ, and the Purchase of Christ is applied, *there* Christ is *in* that Soul; and if Christ be not *in* us, it is certain the Purchase of Christ is not applied unto us, and if Christ be not applied unto us, we can have no ground of Confidence that it shall go well with us. The Peace therefore of our Consciences depends upon our knowing that Christ is in us, and that we are in him.

V. The APPLICATION.

And there are Three Uses of the Point which I would prosecute.

I. By way of *Information*. Hence we may learn two things.

(1.) *That its possible for a Christian to know that he is in the Faith.* Its possible for him to attain to the knowledge of it, that Christ is in him; it would never be made a Duty else to examine himself, to dig and search into his own heart in order unto that end. I say, a Christian may know that Christ is in him, he may know it with a clear, certain, undeceiving knowledge; he may know it as certainly as he knoweth that Sin is in him, that Corruption is in him, with a like kind of certainty. Christ's being in us is a *sensible* thing, it may

may be felt where there is spiritual Life. Besides the Ability by *Nature*, which Conscience hath to reflect upon its self, and view what is within the Man; for it is the *candle of the Lord*, *searching all the inward parts of the belly*, Prov. 20. 27. that Candle of the Lord is snuffed, inlightned, made to blaze and burn more brightly, where there is a Work of Grace in the Soul, the Defiledness of Conscience is by a Work of Regeneration removed in part, the Darkness of it, and its Liableness to be deceived, its Weakness and Inability to discern what is within a Man. Besides, the Word of God is written for that end, it is the *direct* and immediate Drift of a *great part* of it: *These things have I written to you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life*, 1 Joh. 5. 13. It is the Work and Office of the Spirit of God to make us *know the things which are freely given to us of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 12. *Christ in us* is one of those things, ay, a great, leading, and fundamental thing, a comprehensive thing among all the things that are freely given us of God. Tho' the Spirit is by Office a Comforter, yet there is no Comfort from God, unless a Man be in the Faith, and *know* it; unless he have Christ in him, and *see* it. Ye therefore are utterly inexcusable who are ignorant and in the dark, and contented to continue in the dark, as to these great things, *whether ye be in the Faith, or no*; and, *whether Christ be in you, or no*. For ye may arrive at such a kind of Certainty about it as you had that ye were by *Nature in the Flesh*. And I appeal to the Experience of all you that have experienced the Work of Conversion, whether your ha-

ving been once in the Flesh hath not been made so evident and certain to you, as that you could no more doubt of it than you could doubt of your *being at all*. Now if it may be known with a like Certainty that you are in Christ, a Certainty like to that with which you were once made to know that you were in the Flesh, how inexcusable are you to live in miserable Uncertainty and Irresolution, and in Fluctuation about it in your own Minds?

(2) Hence it followeth, that the knowing whether we be in the Faith, and Christ be in us, *is a thing of great difficulty*. It must needs be so, because the examining our selves, and proving our own selves, is enjoined as a Duty in order to this knowing whether Christ be in us, or no : Now it is a thing of great difficulty to examine our selves, to know and prove our selves ; and yet this is the Means, this is the Way to come to know that we are in the Faith, and that Christ is in us.

2. This Doctrine speaketh *Conviction and Reproof for our Negligence in Self-examination*. We know not whether Christ be in us, or not ; we are in no readiness to render a Reason of the Hope that is in us ; and much of the Cause of that Unreadiness and Darkness is our Neglect of examining our selves. Examining our selves, if we would make thorow Work of it, would set the Matter as in the Beams of the Sun before our Eyes, whether Christ be in us, yea, or no. Some of you never examine your selves at all, and hardly ever reflect or think a Thought that way, but live in a hurry, and live on in such a manner, and never consider whither ye are going, and what End God will make

make with you at last. Others of you, tho' you do reflect, it may be, now and then upon some of your Ways, your Hearts smite you, your Consciences recoil upon you about some Passages; yet ye do not enquire into your State, you do not consider whether Christ be in you, whether ye are in the Sabbath, or not? May be ye consider a little what ye have done, how you have behaved your selves, heard, pray'd, kept the Faith, walked; but never consider and examine your selves, in order to *this End*, to know whether Christ be in you, or no. Indeed it is hardly in all the Thoughts, much less in the Endeavours of many a Professor among us at this Day: All their Care (if they take any) is about their Practice, about their Reforming their Lives, if they have left that Sin which they lived in, if they have taken up the Duties they had neglected, if it be better with them than once it was, as to Light, Knowledge, Profession, as to Esteem among Men, yea it may be among Saints; here they take up: But this is desperate Folly, if in the mean time they have no Thoughts, nay, if they arrive at no Satisfaction whether Christ be in them

3. *It should exhort, awaken, and stir you up to examine your selves*, to prove your selves, in order to this, the knowing whether ye are in the Faith, and Christ be in you, or not. Ye should be convinced of it, ye should resolve upon it *here*, you that have heard this Word this Day, it belongs to you, every one of you, and you should go *home*, and practise it *there*; examine your selves, prove your selves, labour to know whether ye are in the Faith, whether

Christ be in you, or no; and do not put off God and your own Consciences with *neglecting* of it; do not put them off with any Self-examination that is not *thorow*, and that bringeth not the Matter unto an Issue between your Souls and God. It is a Matter of unspeakable Concernment, there is great Advantage and Benefit by knowing that you are in the Faith, and Christ is in you. Oh with what abundance of sweet and Heart-rejoicing Thoughts mayest thou go up and down in all the Passages of thy Pilgrimage, when thou knowest once that Christ is in thee! Thou mayest then look upon thy self as justified, thy Sins pardoned; thou mayest conclude thou art a Member of Christ, a Child of God, an Heir of Glory; yea, thou mayest look forward, and conclude, If Christ be in me, if I be in the Faith, thou mayest say, Then God will preserve me unto his Heavenly Kingdom, carry me through all future Temptations, Snares, Difficulties, Crosses that are before me; he will certainly bring me unto Glory at last, he hath promised, he will perform it: You may now think of it with rejoicing, *Christ hath loved you as the Father hath loved him*; a great and amazing Word! *Joh. 15. 9. yea, the Father hath loved you as he hath loved Christ, Joh. 17. 23.* So you may reckon upon it with great Assurance, that there is a Time will shortly come, when *that Love wherewith the Father hath loved, Christ shall be in thee, and Christ in thee, Joh. 17. 26.* Thou mayest not only look forward upon Eternity before thee, but look back also upon Eternity behind; thou mayest look back upon the Day when Redemption was wrought out for thee, and

and conclude with rejoicing in thy self, I was ~~then~~ remembred by Christ; when he hung upon the Cross he bore my Name upon his Heart, and beareth it now in Heaven; yea, I was given to him before all Worlds. I was included in that Covenant between the Father and the Son Jesus Christ from all Eternity; I was loved by him, I was consulted for; the Salvation of this poor Soul of mine was consulted, and contrived, and resolved upon, by him before all Ages. Oh what a multitude of Heart-delighting and comforting Thoughts may spring up and fill the Soul of one who knows that Christ is in him! Labour therefore after that Knowledge, engage your selves unto it, take home a Conviction of it, as your Duty to endeavour after it; and indeed you should never give your Hearts within you, or God in Heaven rest, in pursuing after this Knowledge, until you arrive at it, and it be made clear unto you, and put out of all doubt, that you are *in the Faith*, and that *Christ is in you*.

P 3

S E R.

SERMON XI.

2 COR. XIII. 5.

—*Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates?*

THE whole Verse containeth an *Exhortation* and a *Motive*. I come now to consider the *Motive* with which the *Exhortation* is pressed; *Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus, &c.* From which, Two Doctrines were raised. The First of them being the Fourth in order, I shall now speak unto

Doct. IV. *The way for a Christian to know that Jesus Christ is in him, is to know himself.* Or, by a Believer's knowing himself, he may come to know how it is with him in this great Matter. Yea, you may take it more comprehensively and largely, of every Man: For the Text will bear and warrant it, and it is a Truth, That by any Man's knowing himself, he may come to know whether Christ be in him, or no: If Christ be in him, he may know
that;

that; if Christ be not in him, yet he by knowing himself, may come to know that Christ is not in him.

There are Three Things I would speak a little to :

I. *What manner of Knowledge this is, about Christ's being in him, which a Believer may attain, in this way of knowing himself.*

II. I will give you some *Reasons to evince, or make it appear, that in this way of knowing a Man's self, a Believer may come to this kind of Knowledge, that Christ is in him.*

III. I will briefly speak to that *Enquiry* (because possibly it may stumble some) *Is there no other way for a Believer to know that Christ is in him, but only by knowing himself?*

I. *What kind of Knowledge is it, that Christ is in him, which a Believer may attain and come by, in this way of knowing himself?* Knowledge is somewhat more than an *Assent* unto a Truth; for there may be an *Assent* unto a Truth, even upon the Credit and Testimony of another; this is not properly *knowing*, but *believing*. *Knowing* is an *Assent* given upon Grounds of *Proof*, upon Grounds of *Evidence* and *Demonstration*; and this is that which the Text and Doctrine speak of. I call it *knowing*; the Apostle doth not say, do ye not believe that Christ is in you? but, *Know ye not your own selves* (saith he) *how that Christ is in you?* Unto an *Assent* of *Faith* there is no more requisite, but only the Testimony of another, and knowing him that beareth the Witness; his Veracity, Truth, and Faithfulness, is the Ground of the *Assent*

of *Faith* : But now in the Assent of *Knowledge* there is somewhat more required than knowing that a Person faithful and undeceiving doth bear witness to such a thing. This Knowledge therefore is such, as that a Believer, when he hath it, is able to render a *Reason of the Hope that is in him*. It is the Expression of the Holy Ghost about this very thing, 1 Pet. 3. 15. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*. If a Man know it, he may be able to render a Reason unto the Demands and Inquiries of his own Heart, and to the Inquiries and Demands of another. This difference between *knowing* and *believing*, between an Assent of Knowledge and an Assent of Faith, and that with reference unto this very thing, the Holy Ghost taketh express notice of, 1 Job. 4. 16. *We have known and believed the love which God bath to us*. We have *known*, and we have *believed* ; we have given an Assent unto this Truth, that God loveth us, that we are in a State of Favour ; and what kind of Assent have we given ? Not only an Assent of Faith, but an Assent of Knowledge also ; we have *known* it, and we have *believed* it. For the more particular shewing what kind of Knowledge this is, let me observe Three Things to you about it.

1. *That it is but an imperfect Knowledge*, which is attainable by Believers concerning it, *during this Life*. This Knowledge is a part of the enlightning and sanctification of Conscience ; now the Work of Sanctification and Illumination is but in part, *for we know in part*, 1 Cor. 13. 9. as we are renewed and sanctified
but

but in part : And hence this Knowledge doth not utterly remove all Darknes concerning it, where it is in a comfortable measure, yea in a high degree of Clearness, yet Clouds and Darknes may come upon it afterwards. Besides, it being but an imperfect Knowledge, it admitteth of *Variation* ; one Believer hath more of it than another ; and the same Believer may have more of it at one time than at another ; the knowing that Christ is in him may be clearer at one time than it is at another : *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you, Joh. 14. 20.* It implieth, that as yet, at that time they had not so perfect a Knowledge of it, as they should have in the Day Christ speaketh of. You read sometimes of a *full Assurance of Hope* which Believers should with diligence press after, *Heb 6. 11.* yet these very *Hebrews* had before that time a certain Knowledge in themselves that they had in Heaven a better and an enduring substance, *Heb. 10. 34.* But tho' they had that Knowledge in themselves, that they had in Heaven a better and an enduring Substance, yet they are called to give diligence to the full Assurance of Hope unto the end. This Knowledge is a Grace of the Holy Ghost, and it is with it as it is with all other Graces : There is no Man hath attained so high therein, but there is a Prize set before him, a further Pitch, a higher Measure of it, which is attainable by him. It is a Knowledge, yet a Knowledge not perfect.

2. It is a certain and undeceiving Knowledge. It is such a Knowledge wherein a Believer may be sure that he is not deceived. 'Tis true, Hypocrites are deceived, it is possible they may live and die in such golden Dreams. The

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Church of *Laodicea* was deceived ; they thought they were rich, and increased with Goods, and had need of nothing, when indeed they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. 3. 17. Yea, it is possible that thou mayest live unto the last in such Self-deceiving. Those Words of Christ, methinks, imply as much, *Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, &c. Lord, Lord, open unto us, we have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets,* Matth. 7. 22. Luke 13. 25, 26. God hath no where declared in his Word, that he will deliver and rescue self-flattering Hypocrites from their Self-deceivings before it be too late. Yet for all this, that Knowledge which a Believer may attain of Christ's being in him, is a certain and infallible Knowledge, a Knowledge wherein he may be sure that he is not mistaken. It is implied in that Name which is given it, *Heb. 6. 11. a full Assurance.* You have it expressed sometimes under the Name of *Perswasion* : *I am perswaded,* saith the Apostle, *Rom. 8. 38.* Perswasion implieth more than an uncertain Knowledge, or a probable Conjecture, it implieth a firm Assurance. It must needs be an undeceiving and infallible Knowledge, because it is given by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2. 12. It is by the Holy Ghost that we come to know the things which are freely given us of God. It is bottomed and built upon the infallible Word of God, and therefore it must needs be an infallible, certain, and undeceiving Knowledge : For how cometh any Believer to know (by knowing himself) that Christ is in him ? He knoweth it by the Word of

of God, and by what the Word of God hath held out and declared unto him. And hence,

3. This Knowledge, that Christ is in a Man, groweth up in the Believer's Conscience, partly from Faith, and partly from Feeling: These are (as I may say) the two Roots and Springs of it, the Principles from which it doth grow up and result; there is *Faith* in him, and there is *Feeling*. The *Proposition* in the Syllogism of Assurance concerning Christ's being in a Man, is the Word of God: *He that believeth, or, he that is sanctified, or the like; he that is a new Creature, or he that hath a Work of saving Grace upon him, he shall be saved, he hath Christ in him*: This is the Word of God, and this is the principal Pillar (as I may say) upon which this Knowledge, *that Christ is in a Believer*, doth lean. But then there is a *Feeling*, there is a spiritual Sense and Experience, that concurrereth and contributeth to this Knowledge, and is the *Assumption* of the Reasoning whereby he concludeth that Christ is in him. But *I believe, saith the Soul, but I am sanctified, or regenerated*: This a Believer *knows*, and it is evident to his Conscience by spiritual feeling and experience. And hence the *Conclusion*, That *therefore Christ is in him*, is the Result of both; both of *Faith* in the Word of God, and of the feeling and experience which he hath in himself. Hence the *Conclusion*, That Christ is in a Man, is truly and strictly a Conclusion of *Faith*; and the Assent which is given to it, is not only an Assent of *Knowledge*, but an Assent of *Faith* also; because the principal Foundation of it is the Word of God: God beareth witness in the Gospel, that Christ is in every Believer,

Believer, in every renewed regenerate Person ; this is the principal Ground of that Assent which a Believer gives to this Truth, *that Christ is in him*. It is true, the Assent given to the *Conclusion* is not so full and firm as the Assent given unto the *Proposition*, because this is given to immediate Divine Revelation, God speaketh it (as I may say) with his own Mouth, that every *new Creature is in Christ*, or every renewed Person hath Christ in him : But the *Conclusion*, that *this or that Man is in Christ*, is not spoken so immediately by God ; but is gathered by the Help of natural and sanctified Reason, and spiritual Experience, from what a Man findeth and feeleth in himself, compared with what God hath spoken in his Word. Now that it is an Assent of Faith, is evident (among many other Considerations) from this : When a Believer's Conscience beareth him witness, and faith within him, by knowing it in himself, that Christ is in him, it *beareth him witness in the Holy Ghost*, it saith it *in the Name of God* : Now *that* which Conscience beareth witness to *in the Holy Ghost*, *that* which Conscience speaketh truly *in the Name of God*, *this* may and ought to have an Assent of Faith given to it : But that *Christ is in a Believer*, the Believer's Conscience may come to see, and say, and bear witness to, *in the Holy Ghost* ; it may come to speak it in a Man's own Bosom, in the Name and Authority of God : Therefore 'tis an Assent of Faith, which the Believer gives to it. That shall suffice for the first Thing proposed to be spoken to, *What kind of Knowledge the Believer may have of Christ's being in him*. It is Knowledge, 'tis the Judgment of a Man's own

own Conscience, and *that* upon Grounds of *Proof* and Evidence. 'Tis Knowledge which labours under *Imperfection*. It is a Knowledge which doth arise and result both from the *Word* of God, and from *Faith* therein, and from a Man's *feeling* and *experience* in himself: Hence it is not only an Assent of *Knowledge*, but an Assent of *Faith*, which the Believer may come to give unto this, *that Christ is in him*.

II. *How appears it, that in this way a Believer may attain this Knowledge?*

I. *God directeth Believers to walk in this way, and take this course, in order to the attaining of this Knowledge.* He doth so here in the Text, *Examine your selves, prove your selves, get the Knowledge of your own selves; In order to what? To know whether ye be in the Faith, and whether Christ be in you. Gal. 6. 3, 4. If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself; yea, he fearfully deceiveth himself: But how may it be helped? Let every man prove his own work, so shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another.* His own Work, what is that? It is an Expression of that Latitude as to comprehend and point unto, both the Work of God *upon* him, wherein the Man is the *Subject*; and the Work of God *by* him, whereof the Man is the *efficient*. Let every Man prove his own Work; let him prove and try what Impressions the *Spirit* of Life and Grace hath made upon his Heart, what Work God hath wrought there; and also let him prove his *own* Work, let him prove his own *Way*, let him examine and try his *Frame*, the Working of his Heart, the Course of his *Life* and

and *Walk*, whether he walk after the *Flesh*, or after the *Spirit*: And by *this*, in this *Way* he shall come to a Joy in himself, he shall come to a Satisfaction in his own Bosom from his own Conscience, concerning his own Happiness.

2. *The Saints of God have attained unto this manner of Knowledge, concerning Christ's being in them, in this way of knowing themselves.* I say, the Saints of God have attained it in this way, the Experience of the Generation of God's Children beareth witness to this: Go to any Believer that walks in the Light of God's Countenance, and enjoyeth a stedfast Assurance and Knowledge that Christ is in him, and enquire of him how he came by it, he will tell you *this* was the *Means* and *Way* wherein God gave it him, it was by knowing himself: The Reasons which any Believer renders of the Hope that is in him, are deduced and drawn from some Work of God's Grace in him, they are deduced and drawn from his Knowledge of himself.

3. *There is no Believer but he hath in himself infallible certain Signs of Christ's being in him.* God in his Faithfulness and Wisdom hath ordered it thus: He would not have us in the dark about it, and live all our Days in perpetual *Uncertainty* and *Fluctuations* of Mind, but come to a clear and positive Judgment in our own Consciences about our State; nor would he have us take up with, and build upon *Conjectures* and uncertain Probability, when in his Wisdom, Mercy, and Faithfulness, he hath provided *certain* Grounds of our Knowledge. He hath so ordered the Matter, as that there is none in whom Christ is, but hath within himself

himself Signs and Arguments thereof, and those certain and infallible : For a Sign is a thing from which another thing may be concluded ; therefore it is a thing in its own nature knowable, discernable, a thing which is not obscure, or locked up in darkness ; if it were, it could not be a Sign ; for that which is ordained to be a Sign, must be a thing that is knowable. It is in this Case as it is with Goods or Cattle which belong to a Man ; they have his Mark stamp'd upon them : There is none that belong to Christ, and have Christ in them, but they have his Mark stamp'd upon them : Tho' it may not always, perhaps, be discerned by others, or it may not be always seen by their own Consciences ; yet in the nature of the thing it is legible. This I take to be that *sealing* by the Holy Spirit of Promise which you find again and again in the Scripture ; 2 Cor. 1. 21, 22. *He who stablisheth us with you in Christ, is God ; who hath also sealed us* : Eph. 1. 13. *After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit* : Eph. 4. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*. It is an Allusion to the Manner in use, especially in those Times and Countries when Men used to set their Seal upon their Goods, upon their Cattle, yea, upon Servants and Slaves that belonged to them ; for these were bought in the Market as other Goods were. Hence you read of the Seal both of God, and of Antichrist, in the right hand, and in the forehead, Rev. 7. 3. and 9. 4. and 13. 16. and 20. 4. The sealing of Believers by the Spirit is nothing else but such Impressions made upon Men, as may be discerned
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and read by their own Consciences, and by which they may conclude and be assured that they belong to God: And if there were not such things wrought in every one who hath Christ in him, it could not be said that he is *sealed*, those Impressions of the Holy Ghost upon him could not receive and bear that Name of *sealing*; because a Seal is to make out the Relation; a Seal set upon a Person is to make out Relation and Propriety, it is to be an Evidence to whom he doth belong. This is that which the Apostle saith in plain Terms, 2 Cor. 5. 17. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away, behold all things are become new.* If any Man be in Christ, which is all one with the having *Christ in him*, for the In-being of Believers and Christ is mutual, as I have formerly shewed you: Now, *if any man be in Christ*, saith the Apostle, *he is a new creature*; he is not only brought into a new Relation, invested in new Privileges, but there is a *qualitative Change* made upon him, I say, a *qualitative Change* made by a real Impression and Alteration, which doth evince and argue his *relative Change*; the *Image* is chang'd as well as the *Covenant*: If a Man's *Covenant* be changed, that he standeth in Christ under the *Covenant of Grace* for his eternal Condition, then the *Man* is changed, then he is a *new Creature*: *Old things are pass'd away*, the natural Frame of his Heart, as it stood, as it wrought when he was in the *Flesh*, that is removed: *All things are become new*, there are new Principles in him, new Workings of Heart in him; hence the Heart standeth in another Posture and Frame than it did before.

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To clear up and make out the Strength of this Reason, consider these Five things :

(1.) *The Nature and Characters of a Work of Grace* (such a Work of Grace as argueth the Man in whom it is, to have Jesus Christ in him) *are clearly revealed in the Scripture.* The Scripture doth declare what that Work is which argueth a Man to be in Christ ; it must needs do so, it were else imperfect and insufficient unto the Ends of it : One End of the Scripture is, *that the man of God may be perfect, thorowly furnished, unto all good works,* 2 Tim. 3, 17. And this is one good Work, one piece of a Minister's Work, to clear up to Believers that Christ is in them. The Scriptures were written that we might have Comfort and Hope, *that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope,* Rom. 15. 4. But a Believer could have no Hope or ground of Hope that it is well, or shall be well with him to Eternity, unless he may some way come to know that Christ is in him. *John 15. 11. Christ telleth his Disciples he spake those things (in that Discourse of his) that his joy might remain in them, and that their joy might be full :* And there is the like Reason of all other Truths that Christ discoursed in Scripture, *that his joy might be in them, and their joy might be full.* But a Believer can never have the Joy of Christ, or have his own Joy full, unless he know that Christ is in him. *1 Job. 5. 13. These things have I written, saith the Apostle, unto you who believe ; For what End ? That ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the son of God ; that ye may know it. No one can know he hath eternal Life, unless*

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he know he hath Christ in him: For it is the great *Record* of God which runneth through the Scriptures, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; and that he who hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life, 1 Joh. 5. 11, 12. So that there is no knowing that a Man hath eternal Life, unless he know that he hath Christ. Now the Scripture is written that Believers may know that they have eternal Life; the Scripture therefore doth describe the Work of God's Grace upon a Believer, which is in its nature discernable and sensible, and is a certain and undeceiving Demonstration and Argument that Christ is in him.

(2.) *This Declaration which the Scripture makes concerning the Work of Grace, is such, as that the Mind of a Believer is capable of taking in the Sense and Meaning of the Holy Ghost therein.* The Holy Ghost speaks to Believers; if he did not speak so as that they might take in his Sense and Meaning, his speaking would be in vain. As it is no Witness, no Testimony which is given to one who understands it not; so it is no Revelation which is given to the Saints, if the Saints were utterly incapable of conceiving the Sense and Meaning of the Holy Ghost in it. Therefore, I say, the *Mind* of a Believer is capable to apprehend and take in the Sense and Meaning of the Holy Ghost, in that Declaration which the Scripture giveth of one that is in Christ, by the Work of God's Grace upon him.

(3.) *The Conscience of a Believer is able to compare what the Holy Ghost speaketh in Scripture touching a Work of Grace, with that which his*

own Soul is the Subject of. This is an Ability which is natural to Conscience, and which is inseparable from it. I say, the Believer is able to compare the Work of God upon his own Heart, with that Account thereof which the Word of God giveth: He is able to see and discern the agreement or disagreement, he is able to bring the Work to the Word, and see that they answer one to the other as Face answereth Face in a Glass. Conscience hath an Ability to reflect, and reflect deeply, and that not only upon a Man's external Actions, but the Spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly, Prov. 20. 27. The Conscience of a Believer can bear witness to its own Sincerity; 2 Cor. 1. 12. our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. The Conscience of a Believer can see this, and see it with that clearness, as that he may be bold to own and avow before God the gracious Workings that are in his Heart, Ps. 86. 2. Preserve my soul, for I am holy, saith the Psalmist. I know that Word may be rendred otherwise; but the latter part of the Verse is pregnant to my Purpose, O thou, my God, save thy servant who trusteth in thee: The Psalmist did avow and profess before God the Actings of Faith within his Heart. A Believer's Conscience is able to discern the great Bent and Tendency of his own Soul. David could, Psal. 63. 8. my soul followeth hard after thee.

(4.) *This Ability of Mind to take in, and of Conscience to reflect upon what God speaketh in his Word, about the Nature and Characters of a Work*

of Grace, is improved and heightened in a Believer. The Work of God's Grace, and the Presence of the Spirit as a Comforter, do heighten this Ability of Conscience in a Believer; the Work of Grace cleareth the Eye of Conscience; for so far as Grace takes place, Conscience is sanctified as well as other Faculties; and if sanctified in any measure, there is a Work of Illumination upon the Conscience; that defiledness of Conscience which is natural to us all, is in part done away when a Work of Grace is wrought in us. Besides, the Work of Grace in the Heart puts an awakenedness into Conscience: Hence Conscience is inquisitive; it lies asleep in the most of unregenerate natural Men; but where there is a Work of Saving-Grace, Conscience is awake, and it being awakened, it is full of Reflections and Self-searching, it trieth the Heart, it goeth down into every Chamber there. Besides, Conscience hath a Life and a kind of spiritual Sense put into it in the Work of Regeneration, it is then quick, there is an Aptness and a Disposition in Conscience, so far as it is regenerate, to take in what God hath revealed, to subscribe to what God speaks: And Conscience can discern the very secret Pulses, Inclinations and Beatings of the Soul.

(5.) *There are ordinarily vouchsafed unto Believers, when they are trying themselves, influences from the Spirit of God, raising their Hearts to see and know that Christ is in them.* It is true, this Knowledge cannot be attained without the Help of the Holy Ghost; but the Holy Ghost doth not ordinarily withdraw his Help altogether, but he is with a Believer in this Work and

and Duty as he is in others. A Believer when he goeth to Prayer, the Spirit is with him, as a Spirit of Supplication, crying, *Abba, Father*, helping his Infirmities, making Intercession within him: So when a Believer goeth about this Work, to examine himself, and prove himself, labouring to know himself in order to know whether Christ be in him, the Spirit is ordinarily with him, and doth not altogether withdraw his Help and Influence. These things laid together, clear up this, *that a Believer may know that Christ is in him.*

I purpose to speak to the other Enquiry, namely, *Is there no other way for a Believer to know it? Is there not an immediate Witness by the Holy Ghost to a Believer's Conscience and Heart, that Christ is in him?* But I will omit that at present, and only make a little Application of what hath been delivered.

1. Hence it followeth, *That knowing that Christ is in a Man, is both possible, and it is to be attained in this way of knowing a Man's self.* It is possible that a Believer may know himself, therefore it is possible he may know that *Christ is in him*; yea, it is possible for the weakest Believer, of the lowest Parts, and Gifts, and Abilities, to know with a great deal of Clearness and assured Confidence that Christ is in him. I mention this, because I would dash those discouraging, despairing Thoughts which many are apt to indulge in themselves, touching this. Some Mens Doctrine indeed teacheth, that there is no knowing a Man's good Estate but by extraordinary Revelation; and it is that which our dark, unbelieving,

unbelieving, treacherous Hearts are too apt to be influenced by, as if it were a Principle of certain Truth: But take heed how you give way to such Thoughts, think them not with reference to your selves. If you are Believers, you may come to know that Christ is in you; for you may know your selves. Those Thoughts concerning the Impossibility of knowing that Christ is in you are very *sinful*: For they are injurious to God; they diminish his Love, as if he that giveth Christ to you could not give you the Knowledge of it, as if he that hath designed Salvation for you, could not afford you the Comfort and Knowledge of it beforehand. They are injurious to *Christ*: He who hath purchased for you other Mercies and Blessings, hath also procured unto Believers the Knowledge and Comfort of those Blessings. They are eminently injurious unto the *Spirit of Grace*: He is a Spirit of Adoption, his Office is to be a Comforter; if he were unable for that Work, or unfaithful in that Office, you might then indeed sit down and despair of ever knowing that Christ is in you: but as long as he is the Comforter by Office, certainly you may come to the Knowledge of it. They are very injurious to *your selves*. They make you listless and heartless in labouring after this Knowledge, that Christ is in you; for as long as you think it is in vain to endeavour it, you will never strive after it, never give diligence in it. But there is usually a worse thing at the bottom: It may be thy Conscience is privy unto secret Unsoundness and Hypocrisie at the bottom of thy Heart in all thy Workings towards God, and all the Impressions which have

have been made upon thee by God ; and it is from this Priviness of Conscience unto the Hypocrisie and Rottenness of thy Heart, that thou relievest thy self with this Thought, *It is impossible to know that Christ is in me.* Thou art a Professor, but it may be there is in thee some secret thing of *Belial*, and therefore thy Conscience knoweth thou wilt never be able to know that Christ is in thee, while thou harbourest such a Lust, indulgest such an unmortified Corruption, tradest in such a way of Sin ; and Conscience is privy to this, and knoweth it is in thee : Make thy Heart perfect before God in this Matter. It is commonly so, that there's Hypocrisie in those that indulge this Thought, that 'tis impossible to know that Christ is in a Man. But yet, a Believer may know himself, he may know what God hath wrought in him, whether he be a new Creature, or not ; and consequently know whether he be in Christ, and Christ be in him.

2. *It is a difficult thing to know whether Christ be in a Man.* Why so ? Because the way of it ordinarily is a Believer's knowing himself, and it is a difficult thing even for a Believer to know himself, because *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,* Jer. 17. 9. The Heart of a Believer hath not its desperate Wickedness and its deep Deceitfulness perfectly and thorowly removed and healed, and thence ariseth much of the Difficulty of knowing whether Christ be in a Man. The Heart is full of Darkness, and is full of ungrateful Thoughts : Sometimes through *Darkness*, it seeth not what God hath wrought in it ; some-

times through *forward Ungratefulness* it will not own what yet it seeth; there is an Aversion in the Heart to take in Comfort, *Psal. 77. 2. My soul refused to be comforted*: He had Grounds of Comfort, Tokens for Good, as he there acknowledgeth, but yet his Soul refused to be comforted: And there is an Aversion of Heart even in Believers themselves to *take that way* which God will have them walk in, for the Attainment of this Knowledge, that Christ is in them. Believers are too unwatchful, too unobservant of themselves, they do not know themselves, are not so *willing* indeed to know themselves as they ought: Now this Unacquaintedness with themselves is the Reason why they do not know that Christ is in them. Well, and with good Reason doth the Apostle call upon Believers to give diligence, *2 Pet. 1. 10. Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.* And another Apostle calls them unto it, *Heb. 6. 11. We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.* The same Diligence; the same Diligence that you see in any other, the most diligent and laborious Christian; the same Diligence that *you your selves* did ever give, in your warmest time, when you were under the strongest Influences and Impressions from the Spirit of Grace; the same Diligence that ever you gave, give still. And this he would have every one of them do; And for what Purpose, to what End? It is that they may attain the full Assurance of Hope, the Knowledge that Christ is in them. It is on *this Account*, among others, a difficult thing, and that which doth require Diligence, because

because it is to be had in *this way* ; this is (as I may say) the high Road of Heaven for it, by *knowing our selves* : Now it is a difficult thing to know our selves ; our hearts being apt to *counterfeit* a work of Grace, as well as to *disown* a work of Grace, and it is a laborious thing to search and dig so deep into the heart, as to bring out and set before the view and eye of Conscience the Work that God hath wrought there, and to be able to see and conclude, that it is a *saving Work*, a gracious Work, such as doth infallibly argue that Christ is in the Soul ; and yet *this* is the way by which a believer comes to know that Christ is in him.

S E R M O N XII.

2 CO R. XIII. 5.

— *Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Rebukes?*

FROM this latter Clause of the Verse I observed Two Doctrines:

Doct. I. *The way for a Believer to know that Christ is in him, is to know himself.*

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The *Second General Head* was some *Reasons* to evince this. I shall now enlarge a little further upon the *Third and last Reason*, viz. *There is no Believer but he hath in himself certain Signs of Christ's being in him*; Nay, there is no Man living but he hath *that* within himself which is a certain Witness from God whether Christ be in him, or not. You will easily grant it is so with all in *Heaven*, and it is so with all in *Hell*: But is it so with all the Sons of Men upon Earth? Yes, they have *that* within them which is a certain Witness from God whether Christ be in them or no? For there is no man but he is either *regenerate* or *unregenerate*; if he be regenerate, *that* is a witness from God that Christ *is in him*: if he be unregenerate, *that* is likewise a witness from God that Christ is *not* in him. When I call it a witness from God, I mean, that it doth *evidence*, infallibly *argue* and *evince* in the nature of the thing, and that in the strength and authority of the Truth of God himself in his Word, either that Christ is in a Man, or that he is not. This is a receiv'd and acknowledged Principle among all that know any thing of the Gospel, that *Regeneration* or *Unregeneration* is a witness concerning Christ's being in us or not: The Scripture is most express about it, 2 Cor. 5. 17. *If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are past away; behold all-things are become new.* You see how express and positive the Holy Ghost is in it: *If any man*, be he who he will, greater or lesser Jew or Gentile, *bond or free*; if a Man be in Christ, let his Abilities be never so low, his Attainments never so mean, he is *a new creature*: And the Holy Ghost

Ghost contenteth not himself to affirm it so in the general, *he is a new creature*; but he clear-eth it up by a distribution of the Parts; *old things are past away, and all things are become new*. Yea, and he rendereth us a *reason*, he leads us in the next Verse to view and contemplate that *all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ*: All things, all those *new things*, all that great Change which is made in one who is in Christ; all these things are from God, as having bin in Christ reconciling us to himself. The *old*, depraved, perverted State, the old things in us, as they are *penal and judicial*, come from God as *incensed* against us, being under *Adam's sin*, and having his disobedience imputed unto us: So all the *new things* that are brought in by regeneration, are from God as *reconciling* the World to himself in Christ, they come from him in a way of Grace, they come from him as *God in Christ*. Elsewhere the Holy Ghost speaketh the same thing *negatively*, Rom. 8. 9. *if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. The assertion is very plain, *if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ*: tho' he may have Knowledge, Light, Gifts, and Reformation; yet if he fall short of the Spirit of Christ, whatever he hath, he is as yet none of Christs. And on the other hand the same mark is laid down *affirmatively*, 1 Job. 3. 24. *Hereby we know that he abideth in us*: but how? *by the Spirit which he hath given us*. So that you see there is *that* in every Man, which beareth witness from God, in the strength and authority of the Word of God, either *for him or against him*, either that Christ is in him, or is *not*:
and

and this is, his being an *old Man* still, or his being a *new Creature*.

Regeneration includeth two things. *Vocation*, or effectual Calling. And *Sanctification*. Both these are in every Man in whom Christ is, neither of them is in any Man in whom Christ is not : both of them may be discerned and known by the Man that knoweth himself, both or either of them are a witness from God that Christ is in him in whom they are.

1. *Vocation* or effectual Calling hath passed upon every one in whom Christ is. Christians are called unto fellowship and union with Christ, 1 Cor. 1. 9. in their being called they are ingrafted into Christ : and Vocation is that which a Man may know by himself, he may remember when it is past, may discern when it is present, and his heart is under it ; he may feel the moving of his Soul to Christ, and the transactings which are there between God and him ; and he may come to a perfect and confirmed Knowledge concerning his being called by the effects and fruits of it. If Calling could not be known, believers could not be obliged to make it sure ; but this they are obliged to, 2 Pet. 1. 10. *make your calling and election sure*. Vocation is a witness, and that from God, that Christ is in a Man : for Calling is (as I said) unto Union and Communion with Christ, in Vocation Christ entreth and takes possession, yea he taketh up his dwelling and eternal residence in the Soul ; he layeth an everlasting hold upon the heart in our effectual calling.

Effectual Calling hath two things in it : or rather it is named from two things. For Calling being the motion of the Soul from its formerly beloved

beloved Object to which it cleaved, unto Christ and God in him: Hence there are two *Terms* in this motion of the Soul; things which it cometh off, and is divorced and seperated from, and other things which it is brought or goeth unto. And hence as I said, *Effectual Calling* hath these two things in it (call them *parts* of it, or *names* of the same thing from different respects) *Repentance*; and *Faith*.

(1.) Whoever is called, hath *Repentance* wrought in him. He is called to *Repentance*; and whoever is in Christ hath *Repentance* wrought in him, *the stony heart taken away, and an heart of flesh given, Ezek. 36. 26. his heart is circumcised to fear and love the Lord*: the Expression speaketh that *Repentance* is wrought. Some Divines, and those Holy and Learned, have called this *the preparing* of the Soul for Christ, or *preparing Grace*. They are far from meaning it in the *Pelagian*, or *Popish* sense; they own it to be *Grace*, truly and properly so called; they own it to be *from Christ* the second *Adam*, and *Head* of the second *Covenant*, and a part of the application of Christ to the Soul. And altho' they use that word *preparing*, they mean not in the least that we prepare our selves, or that this hath any thing of *merit*, either of *condignity*, or *congruity* for acceptance with God: nay, they mean not by it, that by this Work the Heart is prepared for Christ to work on it, to lay hold on it, or grapple with it: but all that they mean is, that hereby the Heart is brought into a next disposition and readiness for acting upon Christ and closing with him by Faith. And thus understood, there is not so much occasion of stumbling as
other

otherwise there would be. But as to the thing itself, call it how you will, *Preparing Grace* or *Preparation for Christ*, or *Repentance*: I say, call it how you will, it is certain, that *it is in every one in whom Christ is*: And it is no less certain that *it may be discerned*, a Man may know it in himself. There are such sights of Sin, there is such a taste of the evil of it, it is made really so bitter, loathsome, and hateful to the Heart, as that the Soul may well be privy unto what is wrought upon it in this kind. The Soul in Repentance seeth Hell and Death before it, seeth guilt and wrath upon it, yea it hath some *feeling* hereof impressed and let in upon it; and therefore it may well be privy to what passeth from God upon it of that kind. Now this Repentance is a witness from God, that Christ is in the Soul in whom it is: for it is always conjunct with Faith; tho' it may be considered or spoken of seperately and apart from Faith; yet it hath no existence in the truth and sincerity of it, where there is no Faith; and where there is Faith there is Christ: where there is *one* Grace, there is *every* Grace: where there is *Repentance* therefore, there are all the Graces of the Spirit, and where there are all the Graces of the Spirit, Christ must needs be. The Apostle therefore directeth the *Corinthians* to observe and take notice of the soundness and gracious sincerity of their *Repentance*, 2 Cor. 7. 11. *behold*, saith he, *that ye sorrowed after a Godly sort*, or according to God: and he setteth before their eyes the tokens and evidences of it; *what carefulness it wrought in you*, yea *what Indignation*, yea *what Fear*, yea *what vehement Desire*, yea *what Zeal*, yea *what Revenge*,

in all things ye have approved your selves to be clear in this matter. Repentance in the Sincerity and soundness of it may be known by a Man concerning himself; and when it is known, it is a witness from God that Christ is in that Soul.

(2.) Another thing in Vocation is Faith. And faith is in every one in whom Christ is; for the Soul is implanted into Christ in and by its believing: Faith is therefore called a receiving of Christ, Joh. 1. 12. as many as received him—~~and~~ even to them that believe on his Name. Col. 2. 6. as ye have received Christ Jesus, that is, as you have believed: Faith therefore is in every one in whom Christ is; else Christ might be in a Soul that is in its unbelief. Now this Faith, a Man may know it to be in himself, a Believer may know that he doth believe, Paul knew it of himself, *I live by the faith of the Son of God*, Gal. 2. 20. *We* (saith he) *have believed, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ*, v. 16. David knew it of himself, *I have believed, and therefore have I spoken*, Psal. 116. 10. and he often reflecteth upon, and avoweth his own faith, *Truly my soul waiteth upon God, from him cometh my Salvation, he only is my Rock, my expectation is from him*, Psal. 62. 1, 2, 5. *My soul trusteth in thee*, Psal. 57. 1. *I trusted in thee, O Lord, I said thou art my God*, Psal. 31. 14. Yea, and frequently elsewhere. He knew that there was Faith in that heart of his. And it is evident, Faith may be known, if you do but consider what it is. It is the Souls flying for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him. So the Apostle describes it, Heb. 6. 18. Can the Man-slayer fly for Refuge to the City of Refuge, and not

not know what he doeth in so doing? There are such transactings of the Soul with Christ *in believing*, as are obvious unto the observation and knowledge of a Man's own Conscience. Its true, Faith is seated in the *heart*: *With the heart man believeth*, Rom. 10. 10. but it is as true, that Conscience can go and look down into the heart; that *Spirit of a Man* which is *the candle of the Lord*, *searcheth the inward parts of the belly*, Prov. 20. 27. Whenever a Soul hath once believed; the Spirit of Faith abideth with it: It hath a bent to believe, a Principle inclining it to believe; for it *liveth the life of faith*, *the just shall live by faith*; and now the Conscience can feel the pulse of the heart, how the heart beateth towards Christ. Besides, there are such *Affections* in the Soul towards Christ, such conjugal Affections as are discernable by the Conscience, a Man may see them. The *act* of believing is indeed a transient act; but the conjugal *Relation* between Christ and us abideth: we are *betrothed unto him for ever* *Hosea 2. 19*. And as the conjugal Relation abideth, so there are conjugal *Impressions* and *Affections* towards Christ imprinted and ingraven upon the heart of every believer. You that are Wives or Mothers can experience this and feel it your selves in natural things. That Woman who came before *Solomon* when the Tryal was, which was the true Mother; She felt in her Heart such Motherly affections and bowels as satisfied her, she was the true Mother of the Child: So a believer may feel in his heart such affections, such love to Christ, such reliance on him, such rejoicing in Christ as may assure him that there is in him faith of the

the Operation of God. And moreover, at *first believing*, which I may call the Day of solemnizing the Espousals between the Soul and Christ, there are such Displays made of the Glory of Christ, and such Discoveries let in of his unsearchable Riches, and such Perswasions fixed in the Heart of his Ability, Sufficiency, and Power to save; and the Soul is under such mighty Influences, both of *Light* to discover Christ the Object of Faith, and of *Quickning* to determine and over-power the Heart to cast and adventure it self upon Christ, that the acting of the Soul in believing, under these Influences, may, and doth ordinarily (except Times of Temptations, Desertions, and Backslidings) remain engraven before the Eye of Conscience, as if it were written and printed in a Book, or engraven with a Pen of Iron, for ever. That same Light which discovered the Object of Faith, doth also capacitate the Soul, and enable it to see what it is doing, and what Transactions pass between God and it, in its believing. Now to have Faith in a Man's Soul, it is a Witness, and that from God, that *Christ is in him*: For in Faith you know the Match between the Soul and Christ is made-up; there is a mutual Closing between the Heart and Christ in its believing, it is said to believe into Christ's Death, and Christ is said to *dwell in our Hearts by Faith*. So much for that first thing in Regeneration, namely, Effectual Calling, which includeth under it both Repentance and Faith.

2. In Regeneration *there is a Work of Sanctification*: There is a *new frame* of Heart created in the Soul. And this Work of Sanctification

is in *every* one in whom Christ is ; and it is that which a Man may certainly *know* in himself : and therefore it is that which is a Witness from God, *that Christ is there* where it is. It is in every Soul in which Christ is, there is no un-sanctified Heart hath Christ dwelling in it, it is impossible it should. Christ, where ever he cometh, he cometh into the Soul as a great King, and bringeth his Furniture, his Hangings along with him ; he adorneth the Soul, garnisheth it with the Graces of his blessed Spirit as so many Jewels. When Christ cometh into the Heart, he cometh as a Head and Root of Life ; and thence, as the *first Adam* did convey not only his own *Guilt* and *Condemnation*, but also *Pollution* and *Depravedness* to all his *Seed* ; so Christ the *second Adam* communicateth not only *his Righteousness* for them to stand in for their Acceptance with God for ever, but he communicateth his *Image* to them also. You know how the Apostle disputes to this purpose, *Rom. 6. 3, 4, &c. Being baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death, — that like as Christ was raised from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life, being planted in the likeness of his death, and also in the likeness of his resurrection.* There is a Work upon the Hearts of those in whom Christ is, which carrieth a Correspondency in it unto, and beareth upon it the Print of the Death and Life of Christ Jesus. So that whoever is in Christ, is sanctified : And surely this Work of Sanctification may be discerned, the Conscience of a Believer may know it by this, *old things are pass'd away, all things are become new* : The old *Principles* which swayed in the Soul are dethroned ; and there are new
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Principles of Fear, and Love, and Obedience to God brought into the Heart, and exalted and set up in the Throne, and made the uppermost ruling Principles there. Now such a Change as this must needs be discernable and sensible unto the Believer's Soul. Besides, the Work of Sanctification appears in the Conflicts and War between the Flesh and Spirit, mentioned by the Apostle, Gal. 5. 17. Tho' there be not a Victory, yet if there be a Combate and Conflict, it is a Sign of Sanctification; only then it must be a Conflict of the Spirit against the Flesh; it must not be barely Light against Lust, Convictions against Corruption; but a Conflict of the Spirit against the Flesh. Again, it must be a Conflict maintained, a Conflict pursued, and carried on. Moreover, it must be a Conflict managed by Spiritual Weapons, maintained in an evangelical manner, looking to Christ, depending on him, fetching Vertue from his Death and Resurrection: This Conflict argueth Sanctification. And Sanctification likewise appeareth in the particular Graces of Sanctification; as Love to God, Fear of God, Delight in God. The Holy Ghost mentioneth Fear, as that which a Believer who walketh in Darkness, and seeth no Light, may yet know himself by, Isa. 50. 10. Who is among you that feareth the Lord, &c. that walketh in darkness, and hath no light. That comforting Grace, Love to the Brethren, is a Grace of Sanctification; and a Believer may discern his Sanctification by it. You know how much the Apostle John, in his First Epistle, insisteth upon it. And Sanctification may be discerned in

a Man's *Course*, and *Walking*, and *New Obedience*. Hence it is, that those in whom Christ is, are throughout the Scripture described by their *holy Walking*, by their being *undefiled in the way, doing no Iniquity*, and the like. The Walk of a sanctified Person, and of an unsanctified Person, are very different and *discriminating*; it should be so in the Eyes of others, it may be so in the Eyes and Judgment of a Man's own Conscience; the *Believer walketh not as others do, in the Vanity of their Minds*, as the Apostle speaketh, *Eph. 4. 17.* Now this Sanctification, which may be thus discerned, is a Witness, and that from God, that Christ is in the Soul where it is. That is one thing in that Expression, *sanctified in Christ Jesus*, *1 Cor. 1, 2.* The Apostle *John* therefore tells us, that *we know we dwell in God, and God in us, because we keep his Commandments*, *1 Joh. 3. 24.* The like we have, *Chap. 4. 12. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, And Chap. 2. 3, 5. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoso keepeth his word, in him is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him.*

III. I come to the Third General, *Whether there be any other way for a Believer to know that Christ is in him?* Whether there be not an immediate Witness of the Holy Spirit in a Believer's Bosom, saying to the Soul, that Christ is in him?

There seem to be different Apprehensions, or different Expressions among Divines, and those Holy and Judicious, about this Matter.
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I shall not interpose in the Question; not judging my self at this time, and in this Place called to it: But I will offer a few things, which may give some Light, and may possibly tend to allay the seeming Differences about it.

First, *That word, Witness, may be taken in a different Sense.* Sometimes it is taken strictly, as the Logician takes it, for an *Enunciation* or Affirmation by some Person that deserveth or expecteth Credit to be given him: But sometimes it is taken more largely for an *Argument* proving or evincing. Thus *Christ* faith, the *Works which he did witnessed of him*, *Joh. 10. 25.* and the *Psalmist* said, *the transgression of the wicked said within his heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes*, *Psal. 36. 1.* That is, it argued so, it was a Proof of it. Thus there are Three Witnesses on *Earth* of that Record, That God hath given us Eternal Life in his Son; the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, *1 John 5. 8.* Those Witnesses on Earth are not perfect, and therefore that word, *Witness*, being ascribed unto them, must be taken in that improper and lax Sense: They are *Works* of God, which do evince and argue the Truth of that Record of God; and the Word is frequently so used in Scripture. Now if they who *affirm* there is an immediate Witness of the Holy Ghost, take it in the *last* Sense; and they who *deny* it, take it in the *former* Sense; there is really no Contradiction between them.

Secondly, I would observe this, *That they who do affirm it, do grant those things that do much allay and take off Dissatisfaction in the*
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Minds

Minds of them that deny it. And they who seem to deny it, do likewise grant those things that take off much Dissatisfaction from the Minds of them who bold it.

1. They that affirm there is an immediate Witness of the Spirit, touching a Man's good Estate, they yet grant these Three things :

(1.) That the Holy Ghost *never* beareth witness unto a Man's good State, *while he is in his Unregeneracy and Unbelief*; never saith to any such, that he is in Christ, and that Christ is in him.

(2.) They grant that *this immediate Witness*, which they seem to argue for, is *not the universal Portion of all Believers*; no, nor the constant Diet of any Believers; but it is vouchsafed only to *some*, and that very arbitrarily, and in extraordinary Cases and Exigencies. And hence the ordinary way for a Man to attain the Assurance of his good Estate, is even by *them* granted to be by *examining and knowing himself*.

(3.) They likewise grant and assert, That supposing there be in some Cases, or some Persons, such an immediate Testimony touching a Man's being in Christ; yet this *private Testimony of the Holy Ghost within a Man's Bosome*, may and should be brought unto Trial by the publick Testimony of the same Spirit in the written Word : And this is no Disparagement unto the Holy Ghost, who is the Author of that private Testimony, any more than it was a Disparagement unto Christ's witness of himself, to refer himself, and submit his Witness, even his Person and Office, unto the Trial of the Scriptures:

tures : Search the Scriptures, saith he, for they are they which testify of me, John 5. 39.

2. They who are, or seem to be, against this immediate Testimony of the Holy Ghost, touching a Man's good State, grant and hold sundry things which tend very much to allay the Difficulty and Offence. As,

(1.) They grant the Holy One of Israel must not be prescribed unto, or limited, when he hath not limited himself in his own Word. Hence he is, ever in their Judgment, at a high and uncontrouled Liberty to step out of his ordinary way and road which he hath prescribed us to wait for him in. God is (they grant) abundant in Truth, and sometimes in a way of Grace and Goodness he doth beyond what he hath promised to do ; I mean what he hath particularly promised : As in the Case of Miracles ; the Gift is ceased ; it is not God's ordinary way now a-days ; yet none will limit the Almighty, and say, he never may or will work miraculously. So in the Case of the Illapses of the Spirit of Prophecy, the Canon of Scripture is filled and sealed up ; we are to look for no more Revelation from Heaven immediately in that kind : But yet, if the Holy One of Israel please, he may reveal a particular future contingent Event unto some particular Servant of his in some particular Cases ; and there are Instances of it that cannot well be denied. So as to visible Converse with good Angels : It's true, we have their Ministry, it is our Privilege, we have Communion with them, are come to an innumerable Company of Angels : But it is true, that the ordinary Apparition of Angels, and Converse with them, ceaseth ; yet there is no one

that I know of will lay a Restraint upon God, and say, he may not, or never will or doth send an Angel to appear to any of his Servants in any *extraordinary* Case. There are Instances of that kind that cannot well be avoided. So in *this*, they would not limit God, but he may, in an extraordinary, immediate manner, by his Spirit, witness when he will unto a Believer, that Christ is in him.

(2.) Tho' they deny an immediate Witness, yet they grant and hold, that *there is a manifold Agency, Influx, and Working of the Holy Ghost towards Assurance*; yea, *there is a very high and absolute Necessity thereof*. And hence they are far from *excluding* the Holy Ghost from having *any hand* in making a Believer know that Christ is in him; tho' the *way* he comes to know it, be by knowing himself, yet the *Holy Ghost* is with him and helpeth him in that way, there is the manifold Agency of the Holy Ghost in carrying a Believer on to assured Knowledge that Christ is in him. And let me tell you a little *what Agency* of the Holy Ghost they allow in this Matter, even they that deny an immediate Testimony.

(1.) They grant, that the Work of the Holy Ghost is necessary to *raise and strengthen a Believer's Faith in the Word of Promise*, and to cause him to give a full, firm, and stedfast Assent of Faith unto it; and without such a mighty Hand of the Spirit of God upon a Believer's Heart, he would be full of secret Stag-gerings and Doubtings, even as to the Faithfulness of the Word of God.

(2.) They grant and hold, that there is a Necessity of the Agency and Working of the Holy

Holy Ghost, to enable a Believer to discern that Work of Grace in his own Soul. Tho' there be Repentance there, which hath Salvation accompanying it, Repentance unto Life ; tho' there be the Faith of God's Elect there ; tho' there be true Sanctification ; yet a Believer will never be able to arrive at a satisfying Certainty concerning this gracious Work in himself, unless the Holy Ghost help him to discern it. And to help a Believer to discern the Work of Grace in himself, they grant the Holy Spirit doth and must do Two things :

1st. *He must shine upon his own Work in the Heart of a Believer.* He must clear that up from the Dust and Darkness which sometimes it is under ; he must shine upon it so, as to set it in the View of the Believer's Eye, and to make it evident unto his Conscience, which he ordinarily doth by increasing, strengthening, exciting, and stirring it up unto such vigorous Actings as become sensible, and put it out of question, that there is Grace in the Heart.

2dly, *The Holy Spirit cleareth up the Eyes of the Believers Understanding, and Conscience :* For these are sometimes under very great Darkness. He cleareth up the Eye of the Understanding, to conceive rightly and clearly of what the Holy Ghost characterizeth true Grace by ; and he cleareth up the Eye of Conscience to look back upon himself, to go down into his own Bosome, to search the deep and secret Corners of it, and feel his own Heart, and read the Impressions which are graven there by the Finger of the Holy Ghost. And that is the

the Second thing wherein they own the Necessity of the Agency of the Holy Ghost.

(3.) They hold and teach too, That *the Holy Ghost must put forth his Hand to help the Believer to draw the Conclusion.* When the *Premises* are clear ; when the *Proposition*, the Promise of God, is firmly believ'd ; and when the *Assumption*, the Work of Grace upon a Man's own Heart, is likewise clear ; yet, to gather the Conclusion, and to give an Assent of Faith thereunto , there is need (they grant) of the Agency of the Holy Ghost : For the Assent given, is an Assent of Faith ; now there is no acting of Faith, but under the Conduct and Influence of the Spirit of God. And if it were only an Act of sanctified Reason, (and indeed there is much of that in it) yet such is the Darkness, such the Remainders of Unbelief, such the Strength of that Guilt, and those Misgivings which are natural to us, and so great, so posing, and astonishing are the things which the *Conclusion* doth contain, that unless the Soul be carried out by the *Holy Ghost* himself, to subscribe and give an Assent unto it, it would never be able to do it.

(4.) They will grant, and teach too, That there is a Necessity of the Work of the Holy Ghost *to preserve and maintain this Knowledge of a Man's good Estate, when once it is apprehended.* We have dark, slippery, and treacherous Hearts, there is Unbelief, Guile, and Guiltiness in us, we are subject to Temptations, imposed upon by Satan : On these, and many other Accounts, if the Holy Ghost did not maintain in the Conscience of a Believer that Knowledge which he hath got of Christ's being in him, it would be

be lost again, and he would let it go, he would fall into the dark, and be plunged into the same Depth in which he was before.

(5.) They grant a Necessity of the Work of the Holy Ghost in this Matter of Assurance and Comfort, *to give a Taste and Relish unto the Soul, of the Sweetness of these its Privileges, and the Happiness of its Condition in having Christ.* For there is much Carnality even in a Believer's Heart; and thence, tho' these things may possibly be clear unto the Judgment of Conscience, yet the Heart taketh them not in, doth not drink the Sweetness of them, is not affected with them suitably; and tho' there may be Peace in the Conscience, yet no Joy in the Holy Ghost, no rejoicing, triumphing, and boasting it self in the Lord his God, unless the *Holy Ghost* by his own Influence and Impressions fill the Soul with the Sense and Sweetness of these things.

(6.) And they will grant too, that 'tis the Holy Spirit who *holds them long upon the thoughts, and touches the Affections even to an overwhelming.* I am sick of love, saith the Spouse in the Canticles. Sick, not through her vehement Love to Christ; the Context admitteth not that Sense; but sick through an overwhelming Sense of the Love of Christ to her let in upon her Soul.

(7.) They grant, *That in all these things there is an immediate Agency of the Holy Ghost.* I mean plainly this: There are such things wrought, as that the Holy Ghost is the Cause of them, his own Power doth effect them; and not only so, but there are Touches, as I may say, and Impressions of the Holy Ghost upon

upon the *Mind, Understanding, Conscience, Will,* and *Affections* of a Believer, in all this his pursuing after and attaining of Assurance, and his walking in the Light of the Countenance of God.

Now lay the Things granted on *one* side, and on the *other*, together, and you will find there is no such difference as needs much to trouble you. I may perhaps *hereafter*, either here or elsewhere, speak *more fully* of the Work of the Holy Ghost in giving Assurance.

APPLICATION,

I. The Doctrine sheweth us what is *one thing which standeth between the Peace of God and many a Believer*. It is even this, *thy not knowing thy self*. The Word of God is clear in this Matter, there is no want, no defectiveness *there*; there are Descriptions, and clear and certain Characters of one in whom Christ is, laid down in the Word of God. Nor is the Blame to be cast off from thy self upon the *Holy Spirit* of God: For tho' his Agency be necessary, yet he doth not ordinarily withdraw such a measure of his Assistance as answereth his Promise, and holdeth some Proportion with the faithful Endeavours of the Children of God. Whence is it then that Believers *walk in darkness, and see no light*, and live out their Days without the Peace of God in their Consciences? It lieth here, Brethren, *you do not know your selves*: You have Tokens from Heaven, and Witnesses from God, within your Bosoms, that Christ is in you; search your own Hearts, and get further Knowledge of them, and

and you may come to be as sure that Christ is in you, as you are of your own Beings.

2. It sheweth *how inexcusable Believers are in their want of Assurance.* You are in doubt and in the dark whether Christ be in you, or no: If the only way for clearing it were, that you must *ascend into Heaven*, and have some body tell you what is recorded there, or *descend into the Deep*, as the Apostle speaketh, *Rom. 10. 6.* then you were more excusable: No, but as he saith of the Word of Faith, so I may say of the Ground of Assurance and Peace, it is *within thee, in thy Heart* and Mouth; it is to be found by knowing thy self, and Acquaintance with those Transactions which have passed between God and thee, and the Impressions that the Spirit of God hath made upon thee in Regeneration. If therefore you be without it, you are inexcusable; at least you must needs be inexcusable, even in the Judgment of your own Consciences, if you are not diligent in examining of your selves.

3. *It is great Encouragement to labour to know your selves, to examine and prove your selves:* For by knowing your selves, you may come to know that Christ is in you; and there is not a sweeter or more rejoicing Sight you can have on this side Heaven. Labour therefore to know your State, examine and ponder thy constant way, review all that God hath wrought in thee, all that hath pass'd between thee and him, in order to know thy self; and be diligent and thorow therein. Set about it, and let nothing hinder thee from it. What! a Professor, a Christian, a Believer, one that livest under a lively, searching Ministry, and dost thou neglect to examine

amine thy self? Oh! what have you been doing and learning all your Days, if you have omitted this? Therefore now set about it, *Use maketh Perfect*; the more you are exercised in it, the more ready you will grow. Put thy self by Faith and Prayer under the Guidance and Management of the Spirit of God, who can carry out thy Heart in this Duty so, as that the Issue of it shall be comfortable: It is the Way prescribed by God for you to walk in for the attaining of this Knowledge, that Christ is in you: See therefore that you be found in this Duty; and if by walking in it you arrive at the Knowledge of your good Estate, you will have unspeakable Cause of enlarged Thankfulness unto the God of your Mercies.

S E R.

SERMON XIII.

2 COR. XIII. 5.

—*Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates?*

FROM this latter Clause there have been Two *Doctrines* observed; I am still upon the *First* of them, *viz.*

The way for a Christian to know whether Christ be in him, is to know his own self.

I am come to the *Application*, and shall now endeavour to answer Four *Cases of Conscience*, relating to the Matter I have been upon, *Knowing that Christ is in a Man, by knowing of himself.*

I. Say some Souls, *I do not know the Time when Christ took Possession of me, and was first formed in me; and my Darknes herein makes me at a Loss how to know that Christ is in me.*

II. Others object and alledge, *If Christ be indeed in me, he was not formed in me after the same*

same manner *that others have experienced.* I never felt those *Terrors and Breakings of Heart* which some others have.

III. Others alledge, That it is not so much Darknes about the *Time, or Manner* of Christ's coming into them; but it is this, *There are such hateful things, such things of Belial found with them,* such Sins which they were either formerly guilty of, or are at present intangled in, as that they cannot think that Christ should be in such Creatures as they.

IV. Others object *the Littleness of their Fruit which they bring forth, their Nonproficiency, and want of Growth.* And upon the Account thereof they are staggered, and know not how to sit down satisfied that Christ is in them.

I. As to *not knowing the Time of Christ's being formed in a Man's Soul,* I would say Two things:

1. *There are very few who can be clear and punctual herein, who know the precise Time of Christ's coming into them.* There is a Secrecy in this Work of God upon our Souls, a singular Secrecy and Mysteriousness, *John 3. 8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the spirit.* There are few, that in the Lord's first working upon their Souls, have their spiritual Senses so awakened, and in such exercise, as that they are able to trace the Almighty in his Way with them, so far unto Perfection, as to set their Remark upon it, and say, *at this Time, in this Duty, in that Service,* Christ was formed in me. Usually when Souls
are

are under the first Dealings of God with them, it is a Day of Gloominess and Darkness, a Day of Distress and manifold Temptation with them, their Hearts are put into Hurries; and upon that Account they are less able to discern the Goings of God in their Souls. And besides, some there are who were sanctified in the Womb, as *John the Baptist* seems to have been; and thence they never had Experience in themselves of a Christless, Graceless Estate. Now it is no Wonder if those who were sanctified so early be not able to lay their Finger upon the Moment when Christ was formed in them: For they never knew the Time when he was *not* in them, when they were *without* Christ. And those of the Elect of God, who live to Years of Understanding and Discretion in a Christless State, and so come to have Experience in themselves thereof; yet usually in them there are many *antecedent* and many *subsequent* Workings of the Spirit of God upon their Souls, many Dealings of God with them *before* Christ, be formed in them; and when Christ is formed, there are many Dealings and Workings of the Spirit of God upon them *afterwards*; and hence it becometh a thing of very great difficulty, and next to impossible, ordinarily even for *such*, to be able to say, that at *that* *uncture*, at *that* *very* Time the Knot was knit, and the Match made between my Soul and Christ. It is hard so critically to distinguish between all the *subsequent* Workings upon the Soul, which follow immediately upon Christ's being formed in it, and all those *previous* Dealings of God with the Heart *before* Christ was formed; as to be able to say,

at *this Time*, at *this Moment* Christ was formed in me, and not before. The Apostle *Paul* is one of the clearest Instances that the Scripture gives us of a Work of Conversion; and yet the Apostle, as often as he speaks of it, never tells us, and it may be he never knew himself the precise Moment when Christ was formed in him; whether it were when Christ met him in the way as he was going; or whether it was in those Three Days when he remained blind, fasting and praying; or whether it were under the Ministry of *Ananias*, who was sent by Christ unto him, to preach to him, and to baptize him: *When* it was that Christ was formed in him, the Apostle no where tells us, and it may be he never knew himself, while upon Earth. And if it were so left under Obscurity in such an eminent Instance of Conversion as that of the Apostle, much more may it be so in you and me.

2. *Knowing that Christ is in thee, hath no necessary Dependance upon knowing the Time when Christ entered and first too: Possession of thee.* A Man may know the *one*, tho' he knows not the *other*; he may know that Christ is in him, and yet not know the precise Time when Christ entered: A Man may know that he is a living Man, and hath a living Soul in him, and yet not know the Hour or Moment, no it may be not the Day, or Month, or Year when he was born into the World, much less when he was conceived first: So it is as to our spiritual Birth, a Man may know that he is regenerate, that Christ is formed in him, and yet not know *when* this Work was wrought, when this great thing was done.

And

And therefore to you that are in the dark about the *Time* of Christ's being formed in you, let me leave two Words of Advice, that you may come to Satisfaction concerning the *Thing*, tho' you never find out the *Time* of it.

I. Get Clearness of Light and Understanding in that Account which the *Holy Ghost* in *Scripture* giveth of those in whom Christ is. A Clearness of Understanding in this would help you to know concerning your selves, whether Christ be in you, or not: Darknes and Unclearness herein is with many the great Cause of their living in Darknes, as to *Christ's being in them*. Some Christians there are that go too low, and fix upon those things as *Characters* of Christ's being in a Soul, which yet are found in some in whom Christ was never formed: *Enlightning, Tasting of spiritual Things*, being made *Partakers of the Holy Ghost*, in a common way, and *tasting the Powers of the World to come*: These are things too low, they do not argue Christ to be in a Man; Souls may have Experience of such things, and Christ not be formed in them. And on the other hand, there are some that look too high for the Evidences of Christ's being in them: They take nothing for an Evidence of Christ's being in a Soul, but *Affurance, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, *boasting a Man's self in God, rejoicing in Tribulation*, and such like high Attainments; which are indeed certain Tokens of Christ's being in a Soul; yea, that the Life of Christ is manifest and mighty in that Christian who hath such things: But yet it is true, that Christ may be in a Man, and he not yet arrive unto those high Attainments in Christ. They therefore

who go *too low*, do deceive and flatter themselves unto destruction: And they that look *too high* for Evidences of Christ's being in them, do wrong their own *Comfort*, prejudice their own *Souls*, disparage the *Grace*, and deny the Love of God unto them. You should labour therefore for a clear and solid Knowledge from the Word of God, concerning the Tokens of Christ's being in you; and there is no way indeed but to consult those blessed Oracles of God; they are given us of God for this End, among others; and being given us for this End, you may venture to build upon what they say, you may lay the Stress of your Expectation and Confidence, and that about the eternal Salvation of your Souls, upon the Word of God. Having thus attained a clear Knowledge and Light from the Word what are the Tokens and Signs of Christ's being in a Man. Then

2. *Bring thy own Experience to what thou hast thus learned out of the Word of God.* Compare thy self herewith; lay thy own *Heart*, and what thou findest there, unto what is declared in the *Word of God* as a Description and Character of those in whom Christ is. There is no Man that hath Christ in him, but he hath somewhat in him which may be seen and read by his own Conscience, and may be felt by his own Heart, which is an infallible Evidence of Christ's being in him. *The children of God, and the children of the devil, are manifest*, saith the Apostle, *1 John 3:10.* There is not only a difference, but that difference is manifest. Therefore Christ's being formed in the Soul is for this Reason, among others, called *Christ's being*

being revealed in a Man, Gal. 1. 15, 16. when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me. I say therefore, bring your own Experience, and what you find in your own Soul, unto what you learn from the Word of God, touching the Description and Characters of those in Christ: And there are, among others, two things especially which I would advise you to bring unto the Word of God, and compare and parallel therewith;

(1.) *The ordinary Frame of your Hearts before him.* Christ's being in a Man, tho' it be accomplished and effected in him in an Instant, yet it is an abiding Work, and it is always accompanied with an abiding Change, which is in its Nature evident: If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, saith the Apostle, 2 Cor. 5. 17. There is no Man that is in Christ, but he hath a Well of Water, not a Pool, or a little Flood of Water which vanisheth, and is dried up, but he hath a well of water in him springing up into everlasting life, John 4. 14. Compare therefore the present Frame, and constant Way of thy Heart with what you find declared in the Word of God concerning those in whom Christ is; yea, compare it with what thy heart once was, and that is the way to come to discern so manifest a difference as to be a comfortable Ground of Hope that Christ is in thee: The Apostle did so himself, and teacheth us to do so, Phil. 3. 7, 8, 9. There were (saith he) things which once I counted Gain, such was the esteem of my heart for them, the working of my soul towards them, they were my Gain, the things I lived upon, as men do upon their gettings; thus my heart stood to them: But now

those very things I have suffered the loss of, I have parted with, abandoned; nay, not only so, but doubtless now I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, &c. The Heart in whom Christ is, hath Affectionous bent towards Christ, is framed and moulded by Christ *within* it, to live upon Christ *without*, and to make use of Christ, to improve the Fullness of Christ in all things; it is framed and moulded not only to trade in the Benefits of Christ, in the Commodities and good things which come from Christ; but it is framed to apply it self unto the Person of Christ himself; it is framed and instructed, by a strong Hand upon it, to deal with Christ, the Person of Christ himself: This is his Inclination, there is a secret Bent and Instinct upon the Heart, in whom Christ is, thus to do. Now, if by feeling the Pulse of thy own Soul, thou art able to discern that thus thy Heart is moulded, thus to be dealing with Christ, to apply to Christ for all; if you want any thing, to repair to him for it; if you receive any thing, or be enabled to do any thing, to bring forth any Fruit, *that fruit is laid up for thy beloved*, Cant. 7. 13. the Glory of it is ascribed to him: If, upon feeling the Pulse of thy Soul, thou canst discern that thus it is with thee; tho' you cannot know when Christ first came into your Heart, and took Possession of it, yet it is a comfortable, infallible Evidence Christ is there, Christ is in that Heart of thine.

(2.) As you shall observe the daily Frame of your Hearts so it is useful to call to remembrance the solemn Days of thy Treaties and Transactions
with

with Christ, and improve them. It is true, possibly Christ may be formed in some of you from the Womb; but yet it is as true, that there is no Christian of any standing in Christ, but he hath had some Daies or Times of which it may be said as *Moses* speaketh concerning *Israel's* going out of *Egypt*, *Exod. 12. 42. it is a night to be much observed unto the Lord.* Now review these Seasons; for *then* in thy solemn time of treating and transacting with Christ about the concernments of thy Soul and eternal life, *then*, if at any time, there will be discerned the evidences of Christ's being in you.

II. Some are in doubt and alledge, That if *Christ be formed in them, it hath not been* in such a way *as he was formed in others*: they never had experience of those *Terrors, Shakings, and fears of Hell* that sense of *wrath, those breakings of Heart, deep castings down, and humblings of Soul* at the foot of God, which some other Christians in whom Christ is formed, had experience of.

Two things I would say to this Case.

1. *The way of God with different Souls is very different as to this*: He doth not proceed in the same manner with all. Some Women breed their Children with less sickness, and bear them with fewer throws then others do; but shall she that feeleth a living Child within her, say, I am not with Child, it is but a false conception, because she is not so deadly sick as some others are: So in this case there is a very different way of God in forming Christ in the Soul: in some he doth accomplish it much more easily and gently (as I may say) then in others: in some when the Lord Jesus entereth

into them, he breaketh in upon them with a great deal of Violence and Terror; others he doth steal in upon (if I may so express it) in a more still and silent way. A Man may go into a House by opening the Lock, or lifting up the Latch, but he may go in after another manner by breaking the Door, throwing it off the Hinges, making all crack asunder before him: Such a like difference there is in the way of Christ's entring into Souls; sometimes he cometh in with a still voice, but others he breaketh in upon with Thunder and Lightning: *Acts. 16.* you have mention of two Converts, *Lydia* and the *Jaylor*: in *Lydia* you read of nothing, but that her *Heart was opened to attend unto*, and take in the things which were spoken by *Paul ver. 14.* but Gods way and working upon the *Jaylor* was quite otherwise; God sendeth a great *Earthquake* shaketh the Foundations of the *Prison*, and shaketh his Heart, maketh him Tremble and fall down before *Paul and Silas, ver. 26. 29.* Such is the different way of Gods dealing with Souls; And there is *Wisdom* as well as *Sovereignty* in it; the Lord hath not limited himself to one or the other, but hath holy ends and reasons in his different way of dealing with Souls. Some have been greater Sinners then others, plunged themselves into deeper defilement and guiltiness before him: such was *Manasseh*, of whom it is said, that he *humbled himself greatly, 2 Chron. 33. 12.* Some God designeth for eminent Service and Employment, and layeth them very low before he raiseth them up: so it was with *Isaiah*, whom God made to cry out, *Who is me for I am undone Isa. 6. 5.* In *Paul* both these things concurred and met

met together; he had been a *Blasphemer* and a persecutor 1 Tim. 1. 13. and God designed him for a *chosen Vessel* to bear his name before the *Gentiles, and Kings, and the Children of Israel, and to suffer great things for his Name's sake,* Acts. 9. 15, 16. Again, some miscarry under the hand of God when he is dealing with them, and working on them in order to forming Christ in them, more than others do: if a Woman in Travel will not be guided by those about her, she may wrong her self, hazard her own life, or murder the Child she is bringing forth: it is so with Souls in whom Christ is formed; some of them miscarry grievously under the hand of God: when the Devil findeth the Spirit of God begin to grapple with the Heart of a wild, wanton, senseless Sinner, he apprehendeth himself like to lose a Slave, and that awakeneth all his Malice to hinder and obstruct the work which God is about: hence his temptations are pressing, violent, and commonly smell strong of Hell: and hereupon some Souls Plunge themselves into such sin and guilt in the day of Gods dealing with them to form Christ in them, as they never fell into before: some revolt and backslide grievously after the *beginnings of a good work* upon their Souls, and do as much as lyeth in them to deface and extinguish what God hath wrought. But now others, they are kept and carried on under the Power and Conduct of the Spirit of Grace and Conversion, in a kindly, even and steady manner until Christ be formed and brought forth in them. Hence there is great difference in the way and manner of Gods working upon Souls.

2. *The Rule by which a Sou^l is to Judge of it self as to Christs being in it, is not the degree or measure of these Terrors and rendings of Heart; but it is the Truth and soundness of the Work of Gods Grace upon you.* If thy Conscience be truly awakened, and thy Heart truly broken and humbled; tho' it have not been done with that noise and terror wherewith God hath done it in others, there is no reason for thee to doubt whether Christ be formed in thee. *The truth and soundness of Convictions and Humblings must be Judged of by the attainment of their End, and not by the degree and measure of them.* It is possible a Soul may have an overwhelming measure of Terror, and yet remain unmelted in stoutness and stubbornness against God: it is so with those in Hell, it was so with Judas who had Terrors enough when he went and hanged himself, and yet his Heart was far from true brokenness and humiliation. And therefore it is not the *measure*, but the attainment of the *end* of these things, which is the rule by which to judge of them, and of the state of thy own *Soul*. Now if you ask what is the *End* of Terrors and breakings and humblings? The answer is plain and obvious, the end is the divorcing thy Soul from sin and self, and moulding it to yeild to God, and to the work and way of his Grace. If you have had such sights and sence of sin, as that its activity and power is abated and taken off, that thy sin can no more shut thee up under senselessnes, neglect of God, impenitency, and lyings out from Christ; thou hast sence of sin and terrors enough: if the Pride and Stiffness of thy Heart be so far broken and brought

brought down, as that thou yeildest up thy self to God, to the Sovereignty of his Grace to do with thee what seems good in his sight, and this be the frame of thy Heart; this is Humiliation enough. And the reason of it is plain: These things, *Fear, Sorrow, Terrors, and castings down*, are not good *in themselves*, or upon their own account, or for their own sakes; but all their goodness is in order to somewhat else, it is for the sake of the *End* of them, that what God doth in the Elect may be thereby brought about. If therefore, with a *lower, lighter measure* of these things the End of God's Grace be attained in thy Soul, thou shouldest be so far from questioning or stumbling whether Christ be in thee, as that thou shouldest with thankfulness reflect on and acknowledge his *tenderness* towards thee, in so sparing thee in comparison of others.

III. *I cannot think or believe (say some) that Christ is in me because there are such hateful things, such things of Belial found in me, I am so vile a creature before God, it will not enter into my Heart that Christ should be in me.*

There must be a distinction made in answering and clearing up this Case: Either these hateful things which you complain of, were in you *before* God began to work on you and deal with your Soul, or *since*.

If they were found with thee only *before* God began to deal with thy Soul, the case is very plain that there is no reason at all to doubt of Christ's being in you because of what you *were* or what you *did* before God wrought upon you. Christ is formed in some who were extraordinarily wicked and vile before God began to work

work on them, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, 11. you will see what some of the *Corinthians* had been, *such were some of you*. Therefore there is no just Reason to doubt whether Christ be in you because of what you have done against God, or have been before Him, in the days when God had not begun to deal with your Heart: The truth is, such a thought, that because of what you were or did in those days of Vanity and Madnes, therefore Christ cannot be in you, is a sinful wicked thought of unbelief; thou limitest the *Holy One of Israel* in his Grace, and it sheweth thou hast not taken in by faith the Gospel Discoveries and Displaies of the Grace of God in Christ, you know there is *forgiveness with him and plenteous redemption*, Psal. 130. 4, 7. *Scarlet sin he maketh white as Snow, Crimson sin he maketh as Wool*, Isa. 1. 18. you know that *where sin hath abounded, he hath said Grace shall much more abound* Rom. 5. 20.

But it may be, some will say, that is true indeed, if they were only sins before God wrought upon me; but the things which stagger me and make me doubt whether Christ be in me, are, things that have been found with me *since* God began to deal with my Soul.

I confess this is sad and looketh more dark and doubtful: But yet give me leave to inquire a little more particularly. These things which have been found with thee *since* God began to deal with thy Soul, they are either Evils which the Lord hath *healed* and *recovered* thee from; or they are evils that hang about thee *still, to this day*. Now if they be of the former kind, Evils which God hath *healed* and *recovered* thee from, there is no sufficient ground

ground to conclude that Christ is not thee: nay, there may be no sufficient ground to doubt his being in thee on the account of such things which thou art recovered from. But tho' you suppose you are recovered from them yet let me direct your Eye to consider of three things.

I. *The Time, and State of your Soul when you fell into those things.* It may be indeed it was after God had begun to deal with thee; ay, but it was when Christ was not yet formed in thee. Now it hath been the bitter experience of some of the Children of God, that Sin revived in them, and Satan was let loose upon them, and they never were guilty of such hideous workings and prevailings of Temptation and Corruption as after God had begun to deal with them, but before Christ was formed in them: when the commandment came (saith Paul) Sin revived. There is Wisdom and Love and Faithfulness in this Dispensation of God towards a Soul: it is commonly so with Legalists, such who have been establishing their own righteousness: or those in whose spirits God seeth singular stubbornness, Opposition, Enmity against sovereign Grace and the way thereof in accepting and saving Sinners. And thence, when they had Enlightenings, Convictions, Reformation and amendment, the Lord upon this letteth Corruption loose within them, letteth Temptation loose upon them, and they are thereby cast down into the Puddle and Filth of some lothsome and hateful Sin. It is, that God may lay their Consciences under an indelible Conviction, that a righteousness of their own they never

ver had or can have. Now there is no reason why a Soul should doubt whether Christ be in him because *before Christ was formed in him, and that God might bring the designs of his Grace about,* he was left to fall into such foul and loathsome things.

2. Consider how you came into these Sins which now make you stagger and question whether Christ be in you. It may be useful to consider whether they were *presumptuously* committed, or whether thou wert *hurried* into them by the Surprise or violence of Temptation? There are some sins and falls, wherein as I may say, the Devils hand is more apparent, and there is not so much of the will of the Sinner; he is *pushed* down into them, rather than *lies down* in them himself: and if that be once discerned and cleared it may be some relief: it sheweth the malice of Satan, but it can be no argument at all against the Love and Grace of God. The truth is, the Lord sometimes lets Satan loose to do his worst, and give the most deadly blow unto poor Creatures, then when God hath begun to do them good: He thus suffereth it to be, not only for their *humbling*; but that he may display the *Power*, and *Riches* of his Grace with so much the greater lustre and Triumph over Satan; that when Satan hath done his worst to slay and murder the Soul and put it past recovery, Grace may then come and quicken it in Jesus Christ.

3. Consider how God hath recovered thee, and his way in bringing about your healing, It may be there may be evidences of Christ's being in you in your very recovery. It is no unusual thing with God to recover a Soul and rescue it out of

of a *State of nature* and unregeneracy, and also out of a *particular Pit* and woful *Fall* by some violent *Temptation*, *both at once*.

If a Soul be in Christ, there are Two things which may commonly be seen in Gods recovering it, which are evidences of Christ's being in that Soul.

(1.) God leadeth it back from its Fall *with weeping and Supplication*. I mean plainly that God hath humbled thee *greatly*, made thee *abhor thy self*, made thy Sin a wounding, bitter, Heart-breaking thing unto thee; it may be above all thy other Sins, it hath cut deep, wounded thy Soul; nay, it may be this may have been the standing aggravation of it, *Ob! it was after God had began to do me good*, after his loving kindness appeared, after God had inlightned and awakened me out of my stupid senselessness in my natural Condition, after I had been turned about into the way of Life and Salvation: but after he had thus begun to do me good I sinned thus and thus. If *this* be the aggravating consideration, if this be that which woundeth thy Heart; in this very thing that God hath in *this manner* recovered and healed thee there is an evidence of Christ's being in thee.

(2.) *Thy recovering and healing will be attended with an high prizing and dear esteem of Christ, and that Grace of Christ which you stand in need of*. To have a Man leave off sinning, or be kept from sinning by unaccountable restraints of God upon him; and yet his Heart sit loose from Christ, and be dead as to any living and affectionate workings and goings out after Christ, is a sad and deadly Symtome, it is a Plague-

Plague-token upon a Soul. But on the other hand, although a Man hath been insnared and intangled in Sin, tho' he hath been cast down into a deep Pit by Temptation; yet if he be recovered; and if in his recovery God have imprinted upon his Heart an high esteem of *Christ*, if his Heart be wrought up and engaged unto more earnestness in his applying unto *Christ*, and more constancy in living upon *Christ*; this is well, and is a token that *Christ* is in him: *Christ's* being in him appeareth in his recovery, and in that frame of Heart which he is raised up unto in his Recovery.

But it may be some will say, All this reacheth not my Case. It is not sin before Conversion, nor is it sin which I am recovered from, and which is healed in me; but it is evil which I find present with me *still*, evils that do *now, to this day* hang about me and prevail upon me; these are the sad things which make me doubt whether *Christ* be in me.

This is a Case of great difficulty, but yet of much usefulness and necessity to be spoken unto.

There are Errors both on *one* hand, and on the *other*. For there are some who conclude *Christ* is in them, when they are *workers of iniquity*. And there are others in whom *Christ* is, who conclude he is not in them, because there are such and such Sins found in them. It is true on the one hand, that graceless, *Christless* Persons are described by the Holy Ghost to be *workers of iniquity*, to be such as *walk and live in sin*. It is true on the other hand, that those in whom *Christ* is, have sin in

in them too. Give me leave therefore to offer two things for clearing up this Case:

1. Consider *what* the Sins are which are in thee.

2. Consider *after what manner* they are in thee.

Both these must be put together, and a Judgment made concerning a Man's Condition from them *conjunctly*; neither of them taken *singly* will clear up the Matter.

1. Consider the Nature and Kind of *those Sins which are in thee*. There are some Sins that are not the Spots of God's Children; they are not ordinarily found in those in whom Christ is: There are Pollutions of the World, gross and sensual Lusts, swinish Filthiness, Drunkenness, Uncleaness, and the like; these are not the Spots of God's Children: There are spiritual Sins, which are not ordinarily found in those in whom Christ is, profane Swearing, Cursing, and the like. Now, I say, if *these* be the Evils which hang about thee, that thou art haunted with, and which prevail upon thee, I know not what to say, but this: Neither Man or Angel, nor thy own Conscience, have Ground to conclude that Christ is in thee, if thou livest in such things: No, the best that can be said, is this, thou carriest upon thee the Tokens of a Christless Creature. But it may be you will say, Thanks be to God, mine are not such Sins, but they are Sins of another Nature. I add therefore,

2. Consider *how they are in thee, after what manner these Evils complained of do prevail upon thee*. There is not the least, the fairest Sin, but if it have dominion over a Man, it is a Sign

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Christ

Christ is not in him. And on the other hand there is not the *fonleſt* Sin (the unpardonable Sin excepted) but it is poſſible that one in whom Chriſt is may fall into it. Conſider therefore the Manner how they are in thee; are they *reigning* Sins, or are they only Sins of *Infirmity*? You ſin, you make your ſelves guilty by them; but how is it? Is it through *Weakneſs*, or is it *preſumptuouſly*? It is not the *Matter* of the Sin that maketh it a preſumptuous Sin, but it is the manner of giving way unto it, and committing it, that maketh it a preſumptuous Sin. Now if theſe things thou com- plaineſt of be in thee as *reigning* Sins, if they have *dominion* over thee, if thou ſinneſt them in a *preſumptuous* manner, then truly Chriſt is not in thee, thy Out-ſide may be fair and blameleſs, thy Profeſſion high; but yet if there be any ſuch ſecret thing of *Belial* with thee, which thou liveſt in *preſumptuouſly*, Chriſt is not in thee. *Pſal. 19. 13. Keep back thy ſervant from preſumptuous ſins, let them not have dominion over me; then ſhall I be upright.* If a Man be not kept back from *preſumptuous* Sin, it is a ſign his Heart is not *upright*; there is not Sincerity and Soundneſs in that Heart which *liveth* and *tradeth* in preſumptuous Sin: Nay, let me add, you will find it, upon Conſideration, a difficult thing to give any one clear Inſtance in Scripture, of any Soul in whom Chriſt was, who did ſo much as *once* ſin *preſumptuouſly*. I know the Inſtances which come near it, and have conſidered what may be ſaid unto them; and upon the Whole you will find this a Truth, that it is hard to produce one clear Inſtance of any true Believer that did ſo much

much as once sin in a presumptuous manner. It concerneth you therefore to enquire *how* and *after what manner* the Sins are in you, which you complain of, and on the Account whereof you cannot come to a Clearness that Christ is in you.

You will ask, how may that be discerned, whether a Sin be in me as a *reigning* Sin, and whether, when I fall into it, I do it *presumptuously*, or only from *Infirmity*?

You may know it by this: *How doth your Heart ordinarily stand towards it?* I do not mean, how doth your *Conscience* speak of it; what Light about it, what Convictions concerning it are in your Conscience; but how doth your *Heart* ordinarily stand towards it. The Heart's standing towards a Sin is seen in two things:

1. *Its Resentment of it.* A sin it is, a sin thou art guilty of, how doth thy heart bear that? Dost thou slight it, and make light of it, is thy Heart senseless under it? Or, dost thou watch, and strive, and fight against it? A *sin* it is, But doth thy Heart feel it *as a sin*, and dost thou go mourning under it? Is it a Burden to thee, and dost thou bemoan thyself to God, because of thy being oppressed by it?

2. *What Course doth thy Soul take with reference unto Sin?* Would you be rid and freed from it? Dost thou maintain a spiritual Conflict against sin? This is certain, let the sin be what it will, let it be never so vexatious, yet as long as there is a spiritual Conflict kept up in the Heart against it, that sin is no ground

to conclude that Christ is not in thee. Conflict against sin is an Evidence of Christ's being in a Soul, as well as Freedom from sin; only then you must remember, and take along with you, that the Conflict must be a *spiritual* Conflict, a Conflict of *the Spirit* against *the Flesh*, and must have three Properties:

1. *It must be an universal Conflict against all Sin, one as well as another, not admitting a Truce with any.*

2. *It must be a Conflict, the Stress whereof is employed where the Assault is freshest.* You must strive especially against those sins which hang about you most, and carry you captive.

3. *This Conflict must be managed in a spiritual manner, and by spiritual Weapons.* I mean plainly this: Your Conflict must be maintained, not in your *own Strength*, not in the strength of your own Purposes and Resolutions; but there must be a real Application to *Christ*, in a way of Dependance and Reliance upon him for Strength to help you. You may discern the *Spirituality* of your Conflict by this: What are those Considerations that sharpen and put a keenness upon thy Heart against sin? Are they only rational things, *Externals*? are they only legal Considerations, God hath forbidden them, they will be my Destruction, if I do not strive against them? It is true, these are good and useful; but these Considerations may be strong upon the Spirit of a Legallist, in whom Christ is not, but only a strong Law-Light. But if thy Conflicts be *spiritual*, there will be Considerations and Arguments drawn from the *Love of God*, the *Grace of Christ*; yea, there will

will be an Eye of *Faith* looking upon the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and putting in Suit, and Pleading the Design and Virtue of the Blood of Christ to deliver from the Dominion of *Sin*. These Considerations fetched from the Love and Grace of God in the Gospel, are the things that have a very special Influence to sharpen and make thy *Spirit* keen against *Sin*, if thy Conflict be *Evangelical* and *Spiritual*. And such a Conflict as this against *Sin*, argueth Christ is in thee, as truly, as infallibly as if thou wert wholly set free from it: For *Conflict* against *Sin* is an Argument Christ is in a Man, as well as *Conquest* over it,

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SERMON XIV.

2 COR. XIII. 5.

Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates?

TWO Doctrines were observed from these Words. The First was,

That the Way for a Christian to know whether Christ is in him, is to know himself.

In the Prosecution of which, I promised to speak to Four Cases; and have dispatched Three of them.

The Fourth remains, which was about *want of Fruit, and want of Growth.* I see so little Fruit and Growth in my self, saith many a Believer, as that I cannot (upon that Account) think Christ is in me.

First, As to that of *Fruit*, I answer in two Words:

1. It is certain, that there is no one in whom Christ is, that is wholly unfruitful. Christ is a Fruit-bearing Root, and he makes every one, in whom he is, Fruitful unto God: He is a Root full of Sap and Influence, and he doth not come into a Soul to let it lie dead and barren altogether. If the Soul be married unto Christ, it is, that he may bring forth Fruit unto God, Rom. 7. 4, 6. The Apostle tells us of all Believers, they have their fruit unto holiness, Rom. 6. 22. And Christ tells us, that Branches which are barren, and bring forth no fruit, are cut off, in God's Time and Way, and cast into the fire, John 15. 2, 6. There are innumerable Promises in the Book of God, that those who are grafted into Christ shall bring forth Fruit; and those Promises are sure and stable, Psal. 1. 3. and 92. 12, 13, 14. and many other Places. So that it is a certain Truth, That Soul which brings forth no fruit, hath not Christ in him. But yet,

2. It is true also, that one who is in Christ may possibly mistake and misjudge concerning his own bearing fruit: And the Occasion of those Mistakes are more than a few. Sometimes Christians, through their own Weakness, take little fruit to be no fruit: Luke 8. 8, 15. the seed brings forth, in some thirty, in some sixty, in some an hundred fold; and yet every one of them is good ground, an honest and good heart. Now it is possible, through Darkness and Temptation, that one in Christ may think, because he brings not forth an hundred fold, therefore he brings forth no fruit. Besides, those in Christ may judge of their own Fruit by a false Rule: When they judge of their Fruitfulness by the Number

of Acts of Obedience done by them, rather than by their *Nature* and *Quality*, it is a false, deceiving Rule to judge by. It's possible a Christian may bring forth more Fruit than once he did, or than another doth, and yet the Acts of his Obedience not be so many as they formerly were, or anothers are: And the Reason is evident, because the Acts of his Obedience may be *better* than they were, there may be *more Grace* exercised in them, and filling them up. Commonly in young Converts there is more of natural Vigour, as I may say, in their Obedience and Walking, and so the Acts of their Obedience may be often repeated; but in experienced and grown Christians there is more of spiritual Relish and Savour: Now if a Man's Obedience hath more of an *Evangelical Spirit* in it, more of a *Son-like Frame*, and be refined and purged more from *Selfishness* and slavish Mixtures, which were wont to be found in his Service; if he do the Will of his *heavenly Father*, more like to what is done in *Heaven*; tho' perhaps for *Number* and *Quantity*, his Actions in a way of Obedience may be *less*; yet being for their *Nature*, Kind and Quality *better*, he hath no Reason to judge himself unfruitful, or himself not to have Christ in him. Moreover, it is possible, and some Christians are guilty of taking *that* to be *no* Fruit, which is *precious* Fruit in the Account of God. It is not only being conversant about things *spiritual and heavenly*, that passes for Fruit in God's Judgment and Acceptation; but Employments of a *meaner Nature* may be very precious and acceptable Fruit in God's Sight, when done with a right Bent. It was the Saying of *Luther*,
“ That

“ That the Service of a Scullion, done in
 “ Faith, is more pleasing to God, more glori-
 “ ous in his Eye, than the Trophies of Great
 “ Commanders. And the Holy Ghost tells
 us, *Eph. 6. 5—8. Col. 3. 22, 23, 24.* That
 the Obedience of *Servants* to their *Masters*,
 done in *singleness of heart*, is well-pleasing to
 God, and shall receive a *recompence, or reward*
from the Lord. A Christian may bring forth
 much Fruit, tho’ but little imployed in Hear-
 ing, Reading, or Christian Conference; Pro-
 vidence may call him to other Work: Now
 when Christians in their Employments go up
 and down with heavenly Hearts, and are in-
 fluenced with Love to God; in that case there
 is *holiness to the Lord upon the bells of the horses,*
and upon every pot in Jerusalem and Judah, as
 the Prophet speaks, *Zech. 14. 20, 21.*

Secondly, As to that Case or Difficulty
 about *Growth*,

1. It is certain that *every one in Christ*, and
 that hath Christ in him, *doth grow.* Christ is a
 Head full of Vertue and Efficacy, and *we all*
receive of his fulness, *Joh. 1. 16.* till we come to
 the *measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,*
Eph. 4. 13. Christ is a *Head from whom all the*
Body by joints and Bands having nourishment Mi-
nistred doth increase with the increase of God, *Col.*
2. 19. But yet

2. That this Truth may not Marr the com-
 fort of those to whom comfort belongs, or
 sadden the Hearts of the Righteous whom God
 would not have made sad, *it must be warily and*
wisely understood. For tho’ I say a Christian
 that hath Christ in him doth grow; yet that
 growth is not always *discernable* to himself.
 growth

Growth therefore is in some Cases, a Mercy to be *believed* when it cannot be *felt*: As one once said, *I grow doubtless, because God hath promised it*: Therefore he believed it. A Christian may at some particular times be under a *Declension*; A Saint is incident to *backsliding* as well as an Hypocrite. We find instances in Scripture which do confirm it: God hath promised to his own, *Soul-restoring Grace* and his Children have experienced it, *Psal. 23. 3.* which there would be no need or use of, if they were not subject to declensions and backslidings. *Rev. 2. 2, 3, 4.* the Church of *Ephesus* had Christ in them, the Lord ownes them: but yet he brings in as an Indictment against them that *they had left their first Love*. The Church of *Sardis* had *good things to be strengthened*: but yet they were in a languishing declining condition, *ready to die*, *Rev. 3. 2.* Now although in every part and parcel of a Christians Course he doth not actually grow; yet take it altogether, he is in a growing Condition, God is carrying on the work of Sanctification and Salvation in his Soul. It is in this case with a Christian as with a Tree in Winter time: it doth not actually grow; but yet it hath Life and Sap, and will put forth in its Season. One in a growing Age, may possibly in a fit of an Ague or other Disease, be under the impairing of bodily Strength; but yet he is in a growing Age: So it is with Christians under a fit of backsliding or spiritual declinings; their spiritual strength may be much impaired, but nevertheless they are in a growing State; and God will find time to revive his own work in them. Yea, during

ing that very time of their declension God is laying in as I may say that *Matter*, which the Sovereignty of his Wisdom, Power, and Grace will improve to their spiritual advantage: For the unbottoming them from self, for the humbling them, and recovering them from that carnal Confidence in themselves which was growing up in them; for awakening them out of their Security; and curing the sitting loose of their Hearts from Christ, which they were apt to be insnared in before: And then when Gods time is come for the healing their backslidings, it is commonly, yea constantly found that one in Christ by those very backslidings is made *more humble and more Vile in his own Eyes*; the Lord slays carnal Confidence thereby, and makes Christ more precious to him, and instructs his Soul by that experience to live more out of himself, and more entirely upon Christ for all.

Now it being thus, Christians should not be hasty to conclude against themselves, that Christ is not in them, because they do not find *that growth in themselves at present* which they desire: It may be a Winter Time, a declining Time. But if there be *no growth at all*; if thou beest neither under the promise of it, nor Influence for it; nay, if God so far leave thee, that thou art a Quench-coal to others, and dost hurt to them in their Spirits, this is a black Token, and gives more Cause of fearing that Christ is not in thee. But if there be only want of growing *at present*, you should at least suspend your Judgment against yourselves; especially if there be *the years of the right hand of the most High* to be remembered, if

if thou canst reflect with Comfort upon former Transactions between thy Soul and Christ.

I will now make an Enterance upon the last Point I observed from these Words, which was this :

Doct. V. *If a Christian by examining himself doth not so know himself as to know that Christ is in him, he is a Reprobate.*

Understand the Word still in the Sense given of it, he is to be *reproved*, there are in him Things blame-worthy, *disallowed of God*, and which he should disallow in himself. In short, that Christian who lives without Assurance is guilty before God of things which God disapproves.

It may be, some of you have not taken in the Conviction of this Truth; possibly some may startle at it now : But I doubt not to make it out undeniably.

That I may make my Way a little clear, give me leave to *premise* a few things :

First, *There are different Degrees of Clearness among Christians in their knowing that Christ is in them.* Some know it with a great deal of Evidence, they have a *Satisfaction* concerning it; a Satisfaction in some sort like, yea, equal to that Conviction which the Spirit of Bondage once laid them under, that *they were out of Christ*. But then there are other Christians, whose Evidence and Knowledge concerning this is much more dim and low. I observe therefore different Expressions in Scripture, with reference to this Matter : Sometimes

times the Holy Ghost speaks of a Christians Heart not condemning him; 1 Job. 3. 21. *If our Hearts condemn us not*: But sometimes you read of a *full Assurance of hope*, Heb. 6. 11. There is a great deal of difference between these two; The one is lower much than the other: when a Mans Heart or Conscience *doth not condemn him*, this is much less than *full assurance of Hope*. Sometimes a Christians Hopes do much weigh down his fears: Sometimes his Fears do much weigh down his Hopes. The Point speaks rather of the *Truth* of a Christians Knowledge that Christ is in him, than of the *highest Degree* and Measure of it: tho' not knowing it in the highest Degree, is blame-worthy too. But the thing the Holy Ghost blameth here, is when a Christian is wholly without any Knowledge that Christ is in him; when his Conscience either keeps Silence about it; or is full of self condemnings.

Secondly, Let this be premised too. *A Christian may have some degree of Knowledge that Christ is in him, and yet not know he hath that Knowledge.* That this may not seem strange and impossible, consider a few things:

1. *It is possible, nay usual, that Conscience may not reflect upon its own Act.* Conscience may not see what it knows, may not take notice of the witness which it self bears within a Man. Such a thing is both possible and usual. As it is with unregenerate Sinners: their Consciences do condemn them for their actual Sins and about their State; but yet they do not take notice of those condemnings of themselves by their own Consciences. So in like manner it is sometimes with one who hath Christ in him:

his

his Conscience knows that Christ is in him; but yet he doth not take notice of what his Conscience knoweth and saith.

2. *Christians very commonly mistake the Nature of Assurance.* They think they have no Assurance or Knowledge that Christ is in them, because they have not those Consolations of God delighting their Souls which some others experience and the Scripture speaks of. But this is a wide mistake: For Assurance lies in a Mans Conscience, it is the actual Judgment of that: But those Consolations of God, tho' the Root of them be in a Mans Conscience; yet they spring and grow up in the Heart and Affections. It is in this regard with those that have Christ in them, as it is with many, nay with most of those in whom Christ is not: Many of those in whom Christ is not, their Consciences condemn them, and know they are without Christ; but their Hearts are not smitten with these convictions, nor wounded by them. So those in Christ; they know, it may be, that Christ is in them; but their Hearts are not sweetned, not filled with Joy and Triumphings in the Loving-kindness of God to them: And because they want that Joy and Triumphing they are apt to conclude they are wholly without Assurance, and have no knowledgethat Christ is in them.

3. *Impressions of Fatherly Anger upon the Conscience of one in Christ, and the wounding Sensethereof, and of the evil of Sin by which God is offended, are subject to be mistaken by the Believer and make him think himself condemned by Conscience as one out of Christ.* One that is in Christ, and knows he is in him, may yet be under

under Fatherly Displeasure: God may let in conviction thereof upon his Conscience, may make Impressions of Fatherly Wrath upon the Conscience of a Believer; these Impressions of Fatherly Anger may wound the Heart of a Saint, fill it with bitterness, and set it a bleeding. Now when a Believer shall Reflect upon this; he may mistake these woundings by the Sense of *Fatherly Wrath*, for the Judgment of Conscience that he is out of Christ.

Thirdly, *A Believers not knowing that Christ is in him, tho' it be a Sin, yet 'tis but a Sin of Infirmary* That it is a sin I shall shew anon: but now I say it is but a sin of *Infirmary*. It is plain it is so. For,

1. If a Man be a Believer, *this sin is that which he is burthened with*, which he laments, strives against, complains of unto God, it is an evil which he is held captive by against his own strugglings under it. Now that Sin which one in Christ thus bewails and strives against, is but a sin of *Infirmary* in him.

2. *It is in a Believer a sin of Ignorance, and therefore it is but a sin of Infirmary*. It is but a sin of *Ignorance*: i. e. he knows it not to be a sin in *himself*. For tho' a Believer may and doth know that every one in Christ ought to be assured that Christ is in him; yet as to *himself* in particular, he is not clear that he is a Believer, that Christ is in him; and therefore in him it is but a sin of Ignorance, it is from the darkness of his Conscience that he doth not know Christ is in him. Now this not knowing that Christ is in him being in a Believer but a sin of Ignorance; hence two things follow.

(1.) *That it is not inconsistent with his standing*

in the Covenant of Grace. As it cannot cast him out, so it doth not argue him not to be in it. It is but a sin of Infirmary, and then it is not a *reigning* Sin, nor inconsistent with a saving work upon the Soul. And hence,

(2.) It follows also that it being a sin of infirmity in a Believer, *it hath in ordinary, a pardon of course vouchsafed to it.* When I say a pardon of Course, I mean a pardon as to *Fatherly Anger.* *Law-vengeance* and *Wrath* never falleth upon a Believer for any Sin whatever; because he is *in Christ*, and *not under the Law*: But fatherly Anger may fall upon a Believer; may kindle and burn against him; it doth so in some Cases; but in this *not knowing that Christ is in him*, it being ordinarily but a sin of infirmity, it hath ordinarily a Pardon of Course as to *fatherly Anger.* God doth not only *pardon iniquity* but he *passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his Heritage*, Mic. 7. 18. There are many Sins in the Children of God, which God sees, and yet he doth connive at, never visits, never makes them smart for 'em, but gives them a Pardon of Course as to *Fatherly Anger*; they don't break their Peace, they hide not the light of God's Countenance, they don't found a Controversie between the Soul and God. It is so as to *this not knowing that Christ is in them*, it is so ordinarily, it hath a Pardon of Course even as to *Fatherly Anger.* But I put in that word *ordinarily*: because there are Cases wherein God will manage a bitter Controversie with the Soul for this very Sin of his, *not knowing Christ to be in him.* There is sometimes much *frowardness* of Heart and *wilfulness* in it: a Believer possibly may be so peevish

peevish as to shut his Eyes against the light, and refuse it, and the comfort of it: *My Soul refused to be comforted* saith the Psalmist, *Psal.* 77. 2. There are some other Aggravations of a Believers *not knowing* that Christ is in him: there may be a great deal of *sloth*, *slightness* of Spirit, and *negligence* in it. Especially if there be sloth and slightness of Spirit under *choice and singular Advantages*, and means for this knowledge: when a Christian shall live under a clear Gospel Ministry, that hath a great tendency to Assurance and Comfort; and yet through sloth and deadness of Heart shall live in his darkness and doubtings: in this Case, those very doubtings, that very darkness may found a dreadful Controversie between God and that Child of his. And some other Cases there are wherein this Sin may do so: yet being but a Sin of *Infirmity* it hath in ordinary a Pardon of Course, even as to Fatherly Anger.

These things being premised, I come to make out the *Truth* of the Doctrine, and to clear it up to you that it is a *Sin* for a Believer not to know that Christ is in him. You will all acknowledge it to be your *Calamity* and *Misery*; but you are not convinced 'tis your *Sin*: Therefore let me mention two Things to make this out.

First. It is a sinful and blame-worthy thing *in it self*

Secondly, There are alwaies other blame-worthy things which accompany it.

First, It is a sinful and blame-worthy thing in it self. To prove this, Consider

1. *The Office of Conscience, and the obligation which it lieth under.* That which is contrary to

the Office and obligation of Conscience, is a Sin: But a Believer's *not knowing* that Christ is in him is contrary to the duty and obligation of his Conscience: Therefore it is a *Sin*. Again, Conscience ought to be *Good*, Acts 23. 1. But Conscience cannot be good, unless it be *honestè & pacatè bona*; if it want either Light or Peace, it is so far evil and vicious, and defiled. Moreover, The duty to which Conscience is bound is not only to *Direct* a Man before hand concerning his Actions, but to *Reflect* upon those Actions when done and past. And as it is the duty of Conscience to reflect upon *Actions* when past; so also to sit in Judgment upon a Man with relation to his *State*, and pronounce Sentence concerning *that*. And Conscience is bound to *know* concerning our State *what God hath revealed in his Word*; it is the duty of Conscience to judge according to the Judgment of God in his Word: But God hath in his Word declared and given Judgment concerning every Man, whether Christ be in him or not.

It is a duty to which the Conscience of a Man *out of Christ* is bound, to tell him that he is out of Christ: and if it doth not, it is the *sin* of his Conscience; because his Conscience is sinfully stupid and secure, and speaks not the Truth: But now it is as well and as much the duty of the Conscience of one *in Christ* to tell him *that Christ is in him*. The Curse or Sanction of the Covenant of Works doth not, cannot, more strongly bind the Conscience of the sinner who is under it, or more strongly convince of Sin, than the Promise or Declaration of Grace binds the Conscience of a Believer

Believer under the Gospel to conclude that Christ is in him. It is the Sanction or Threatning of the *Law* or Covenant of Works, which binds the Conscience of one who is *under* it to tell him he is so. But it is the Declaration of God in the *Gospel*, that one who believes on the Lord Jesus hath Christ in him; And therefore by the Word of the Gospel a Believers Conscience is bound, as well as the Christless Sinners Conscience, by the Sanction of the Law.

Lastly, Application is as well as much, nay more the duty of Conscience than *Direction* or Knowledge is. *Job* 5. 27. A Man is bound to *know* the *Duties* which concern him, Conscience is bound to *direct*; And it is bound also to *Apply*; for Knowledge not applied is vain, and fruitless and ineffectual. Which Application is as much the duty of Conscience, with reference to a Mans *State*, as it is with reference to his *Actions*. Now if an *Unbeliever's* Conscience be bound to apply, and say thou *sinnest* in *this* or *that*; it is much more bound to tell him thou art in a *State of Wrath*. Knowledge is in order to, and for the sake of *Application* to a Man's self; and that with reference to his *State*: The Christless Sinners Conscience is bound to apply the Threatning and Curse of the Law to himself; and this not only as a means of Repentance, and in order to his Recovery; but also by virtue of natural Justice it is due to God from the Sinner. So in like manner it is a duty bound upon the Conscience of a *Believer* to tell him that Christ is in him; this also is due to God by virtue of natural Justice; For it is a principle of na-

tural Justice, that *we should take part with God*, that our Consciences should fall in with God, and his Word declaring his Mind ; And as Conscience ought to do so when God's Word *condemns*, so when God's Word speaks *peace* unto it : And as in order to a *Sinners* Repentance and Humiliation, his Conscience is bound to apply the Judgment of God in his Word ; So in order to a *Believer's* Peace and Comfort, his Conscience is bound to speak within him what God by his Word speaks concerning him.

2. A Believer's not knowing that Christ is in him, *is unlike a Saint of God*. You find but few Instances in Scripture where the Consciences of God's Children did not say to them that Christ was in them : Those Terrors the Children of God in Scripture were under, do many of them seem to be *rather* the wounding sense of God's *fatherly anger*, than the Judgment of Conscience, that they were in a *state of condemnation* : But this is certain, there is no Instance at all of it in all the *New Testament* ; And in the New Testament days there is more of the Spirit and Power of Adoption, and less of a slavish, servile Spirit which Believers before were held to. Now there is no Instance in the *New Testament* of any Believer whose Conscience did not tell him, that Christ was in him : It is therefore unlike a Child of God, not like a New Testament Spirit.

3. *It is a part of the Depravation of a Believer's Conscience, and that defilement and pollution which is upon it, when it doth not say that Christ is in him*. As the testimony of his Conscience concerning his State, that he is in Christ, is part

part of the *Sanctification* of Conscience; so its silence about it, its darkness, mistake and misjudging is part of the *pollution* of Conscience: Now all Pollution of Conscience is *Sin*, a piece of its Depravation and Corruption; and the Vices of *Conscience* are things hateful to God, things for which we should reprove and judge our selves, as well as for the Depravation and Corruption of any other *Faculty*.

4. *It is a piece of a Believer's disconformity to Christ.* Christ had a sense of his Fathers Wrath which fell upon him as he was Surety for Sinners, yea Christ had a large apprehension of the woful bitterness, dread and terrour of that wrath which came marching forth in Battel-Array against him, his heart was *smitten* and *wounded* thereby: But yet Christ's Conscience was never under darkness or doubts concerning his interest in God's favour and fatherly love unto him. If therefore thou art a Believer, one in Christ, and yet thy Conscience be in darkness and doubt about thy *State*, whether Christ be in thee or no; it is a piece of thy disconformity to Christ: Christ always walked in the light of his Father's Countenance so far as concerned the judgment of his own Conscience; and therefore Christ had *Assurance* when it was at the darkest with him, *He is near that justifies me*; so speaks Christ even when conflicting with his Father's Wrath, *Isa.* 50. 8, 9. thus was he assured in himself, even when he was under the deepest woundings in Spirit by his Father's Wrath. A Believer is often called to feel and taste the displeasure of God against him for such and such a sin, he is often called to mourn under it, to bemoan himself, to be

in bitterness because of it; yea, a Believer should have a large, heart-affecting apprehension of the terrour of God, and dread of his Wrath: but yet withal, a Believer's Conscience should always be clear concerning his union to Christ, and his interest in the unchangeable love of God. So it was with the Lord Jesus, and if it be not so with us, we do not follow his example, we are so far unlike and disconformed to Christ.

APPLICATION.

All the Use I shall make is in one word. *Your not knowing that Christ is in you shows you what to think of your selves upon this account.* Thou that livest in Darkness and doubt about it, *thou livest in Sin* (take that home) a sin of Infirmity, but a sin it is, and so you should look on it. You should therefore lament it before God, lament it not as your calamity only, but as your sinful miscarriage, as your evil, as your iniquity, as a piece of the defilement of your Conscience: You should Judge, loath, Arraign and Condemn your selves for it; not only for the thing that causes it, but for the thing it self. If thou *walkest in darkness and hast no light*, thou shouldest arraigne thy self for *this* before God; it is among thy *Sins*, and so reckoned by God. May be many of us do lament it as our *calamity*, but that is not enough; you should make another Judgment of it; It is a piece of your misery; true, but it is no less true that it is a *Sin* also; and you should so Judge of it, and deal with it, and carry towards it: Now how should

should your Hearts carry towards Sin? you know you should hate it, and strive against it, and Pray against it, and never be quiet while it hangs about you. So must your Hearts be affected towards *this Sin, your not knowing that Christ is in you*; you must strive against it, Pray against it, be restless while it hangs about you, and neither give your Hearts, nor God in Heaven rest till you know that Christ is in you.

S E R M O N X V.

2 C O R. XIII. 5.

Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

THE Doctrine I am upon is this, *That if a Christian do not so know himself as to know that Christ is in him he is a reprobate, i. e. there is somewhat or other in that Christian which is blame-worthy, there is some sinful, evil thing in him; He liveth in a sinful condition that liveth without this Knowledge. In short, that Christian who lives without assurance is much to be blamed.*

Somewhat hath been spoken formerly for

clearing up the meaning of the Doctrine, to prevent misunderstanding. Somewhat also hath been spoken for the making it out and evidencing the truth of it.

There are in the general Two Arguments that I shall further prosecute to evince the truth of the Doctrine.

1. It is a *sinful thing in it self* to live without Assurance; Therefore he that doth so, is *blame-worthy* and to be *reproved*.

2. There is no Christian that liveth without Assurance but there are *many other evil and sinful things in him besides this want of Assurance*; there are other things of *Belial* in that Christian that liveth without it.

1. That being *without Assurance*, or a Believers not knowing that Christ is in him, is *it self a sinful thing*, hath been made appear from four Considerations already.

I will mention two Considerations more to evince, that this *not knowing that Christ is in a Man* is *it self an evil and sinful thing*.

5. It must needs be an evil thing because *no good account can be given of it, no reason can be rendered* of a Christians not knowing that Christ is in him: *no sufficient reason, no reason that will excuse or Justifie*, when God shall come and expostulate with a Man by his Spirit, or by any awakening and startling Providence; as sometimes Christ did with his Disciples, *why do ye doubt, O ye of little faith?* So when he shall come unto a Believer and say, *why dost thou not know that Christ is in thee? why dost thou doubt, and why art thou in the dark about it?* Such an one's Mouth will be stopped, Conscience will be silent, he will never

ver be able to make any Reply, or make any sufficient Answer or Apology for not knowing that Christ is in him. And that appeareth thus:

If any thing can be said sufficient to excuse or justifie this, it must be one of these two things: Either because it is not a matter of concernment to know; or else, because it is a Secret, unrevealed by God, and locked up in his own Breast: But neither of these Allegations can be truly made.

(1.) *No Christian can say, that it is not a matter of Concernment and Moment to know whether Christ be in him.* If Christ's being in a Man be a matter of Concernment, then the knowing of it must be so too; but Christ's being in a Man is a matter of great Concern; the hopes of Glory are built upon it, *Christ in you the hope of Glory, Col. 1.27.* If Christ be not in a Man, that Man is not in Christ; for this in-being is mutual between Christ and the Soul, *John 14.20. You in me, and I in you, saith Christ; and so Chap. 6. 56. he dwelleth in me, and I in him.* I say it is mutual; therefore if Christ be not in a Man, that Man is not in Christ; and he that is not in Christ is under Condemnation, *Rom. 8.1. there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, but to all others there is.* If Christ be in you, saith the Apostle, *Rom. 8.10. the Body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness:* You have Sin in you, Sin hath seiz'd upon you; Sin yet dwelleth in you, that Body therefore of yours must die: ay, but the Spirit, your Soul, that is life, it shall live eternally because of righteousness, the righteousness of Christ imputed to you; but if

if Christ be *not* in you, even the Soul is in a state of spiritual and eternal Death, because of its guiltiness before God. No one therefore can say, it is not a matter of Concernment to know whether Christ be in him or not; all his hopes, as to eternal well-being, if well grounded, depend upon, and are according to Christ's being in him, yea or no.

(2.) Nor can it be alledged and pleaded, that this is a *Secret locked up* from the eyes of all living in the breast of God, whether Christ be in a Man or not. No, it is a thing which God hath discovered and made known; the Saints have known it, and that by ordinary Means and Methods, and not by singular Prerogative or Revelation. Paul thus knew that Christ lived in him, *Gal. 2. 20. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* The Lord Jesus hath promised, that Believers shall know that he is in them, and they in him, *John 14. 20. At that day ye shall know, that I am in the father, and you in me, and I in you.* He hath ordained and given us Means for this thing, that we may know that Christ is in us: The blessed Scriptures of God are given for this end among others, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope, *Rom. 15. 4.* John tells us, he writ his Epistle upon this Design, this was the aim of the Holy Ghost in it, that believers might know that they have eternal life, *1 John 5. 13.* God hath in his Word given such Descriptions and Characters of those that have Christ in them, as may be discerned, and clearly read by themselves: I say, *undeceiving* Characters that may be certainly and infallibly discerned and read by themselves; and therefore it is not a Secret locked

locked up in the bosom of God, whether Christ be in a Man or no. *He that is in Christ*, saith the Apostle, *is a new creature*; and this is universally true; *If any man be in Christ he is a new creature*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. Believing is an infallible and undeceiving sign of Christ's being in a Man, *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood* (saith Christ, John 6. 56.) *dwelleth in me, and I in him*. Eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood of Christ is nothing else but *believing* or *acting Faith* upon him. Sanctification, a new Principle of Spiritual Life, working up to newness of obedience, is a certain and infallible Argument of Christ's being in a Man: *Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us*, 1 John 3. 24. the like ye have chap. 4. 13. *by keeping his commandments we know that we are in him*, 1 John 2. 3, 4, 5. Now God having declared in his Word concerning these and such like things as these, which are in their own nature *discernable*, that they are infallible and undeceiving Arguments of Christ's being in a Soul, it cannot be alledged and pleaded that it is a *Secret* unrevealed, which belongeth not to us to know. Now, if it be a thing of such unspeakable *concern and weight*; And if it be a thing *revealed* and manifested by God in his Word, There can then no good Reason be produced why a Christian knoweth not that Christ is in him.

6. *A Christians Ignorance that Christ is in him, Who is the Author of it?* It is either from God or from the Devil. It cannot be from God, he cannot be the Author, for he is the *forbidder* of it; you cannot therefore impute and cast the blame of it upon him: It is therefore from
Satan

Satan, it is he that holdeth thine Eyes in the dark, and putteth thee in doubt and unresolv-
edness whether Christ be in thee or no. If it be
of *Satan* it is certainly *evil*, it is a *work of the
Flesh*, and a *work of the Devil*: Therefore as
the Apostle speaks of an erroneous Perswa-
sion which was among the *Galatians*; *this
Perswasion cometh not of him that calleth you*:
So I say concerning this Ignorance and unrea-
solvedness whether Christ be in you or no, it
cometh not of him that hath called you, no, it
cometh from that Enemy of your Calling and
Salvation: It is therefore a peice of compliance
with the Devil. Now to comply with the
Devil, and that against Christ, and against the
Word of Christ, must needs be an evil and
blame-worthy thing: but this thy not knowing
that Christ is in thee (if thou art a Christian)
is a complying with the Devil, and that against
Christ, and the Word of Christ, yea against the
Office and Work of the Spirit of Christ, for it is
his Work and Office to reveal and make thee
know the things that are freely given thee of God. It is
a peice of subjection unto, thy very Conscience
is subject unto Satan while thou knowest not that
Christ is in thee: It is detained and held down
by him, it is by him kept back from knowing
that Christ is in thee. It is a sad thing to have
any faculty influenced and possessed by Satan.
To have *affections* and *Passions* raised and blown
up by him, how sad is that? to have thy
Will Captivated and in Chains by Satan; this
is the sad condition of every unregenerate
Person: But to have the *Conscience* in Captivity
to the Devil is in some respect sadder: yet
this is the case of those Christians who do not
know

know that Christ is in them. Thy Conscience is in Captivity to Satan, it is he that keepeth it back, it is he that withholdeth it from bringing in that Verdict, and passing that Judgment concerning thee that thou art in Christ. If Conscience were under the influence of Satan as to its *directing* Work how sad would it be? how fearful a thing would it be to have the Devil get into a Mans Conscience and make him *verily think that he ought to do things* which are hateful and provoking unto God! It must needs then be sad and sinful for the Devil to be in a Mans Conscience and to influence it in its *judging* and *sentencing* Work: Now so the Devil doth, when he maketh the Conscience of a Christian to judge wrong about his State, and not to know that Christ is in him when indeed he is. That is all I will say as to the *first Argument*. That not knowing that Christ is in a Man is a *sinful thing in it self*.

2. *That Christian who knoweth not that Christ is in him, hath always other things of Belial found with him*: there are other evils which always *accompany* a Christian's not knowing that Christ is in him. By things of *Belial* I mean such evil things as are very hateful and burdensome to God, and to the blessed Spirit of God. There are some sinful imperfections in the best Saints under Heaven: these God pitieth them for: But there are in many of Gods Children infirmities which are burdensome and bitter to the Lord and very grievous to his Spirit: and *such* things I mean, when I say there are things of *Belial* with that Christian who doth not know that Christ is in him. If you ask what are those things? I Answer,
1. There

1. There are some evil things which are *the Root and Causes* from which this ignorance of Christ's being in a Man, doth spring.

2. There are some other things of *Belial* which are *the Fruit* brought forth by this not knowing that Christ is in him. And it is impossible it should be otherwise; there will be in you things hateful to God as long as you know not that Christ is in you.

1. *There are evil things in you which are the Root from whence this want of Assurance springeth.* It always groweth up from a bitter Root, from things grievous to the Spirit of God.

(1.) Sometimes it is from *weakness of Faith*; and secret but sinful staggerings at the promise of God. God declareth in his Word that Christ is in a Believer, in every sanctified regenerate Person: but there are some, that being conscious to themselves that they have been very guilty and vile before God, stagger at the promises and are full of doubtings and questionings in themselves, *how can this be that Christ should be in one who hath done such things against God, who am so vile before God?* But this is a thing very grievous and bitter to the Spirit of God: for you limit his Grace and set bounds and measures to *that*.

(2.) Sometimes it is from the *lowness and imperfection of the Work of Regeneration and Conversion* in the Soul. There may be some Seed of it, there may possibly be so much of regenerating work, as that the state of the Soul is changed; but yet the Work of Conversion and Regeneration is so low, so exceeding low, as
that

that it cannot be discerned without a great deal of difficulty: There is very *little Grace* in a Man, the Grace that is, is but *little*, it runneth low; and thence cannot be seen. *Faith* (for Example) is a Work of Grace, an evidence of Christ's being in a Man; but it is oftentimes from the *weakness* and *lowness* of a Believer's *Faith*, that he cannot discern that he hath any Faith at all. The like I might shew concerning other parts of the Work of Regeneration; there is a great deal of defectiveness, the heart is not perfect with God in them; and thence they are not evident to a Man's Conscience.

(3) Sometimes it is from the *darkness* and *deceivedness* of a Man's Conscience, that he seeth not and knoweth not that Christ is in him: The Devil imposeth his Delusions and Suggestions upon the Man's Conscience. Now this must needs be grievous to God, that the Devil should be allowed to set up his Throne and Judgment there, and bear the Sway in any measure in a Believer's Conscience. And hence it is, that even those who have Christ in them, are apt sadly to mistake, both on the one hand, and on the other. Such Spots in themselves as are found on the Children of God, they aggravate, and take them to be Tokens of a Graceless, Christless Condition; but that is a foul Mistake on the one hand. And on the other hand, such good things in them as are Evidences of Christ's being in a Soul, they look upon but as common unto Christless, Graceless Persons: They look upon the Tokens of God's Love, not as Tokens of *Love*, but extenuate and diminish them: As God's People of old
said

said concerning his outward Dispensations, *Mal. 1.2,3,4. I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his Mountains waste* Even so it is with them in whom Christ is; They say, it is true, God hath wrought this and that in me, hath let in light and awakened me, made me see my lost and perishing condition, and see a fulness and excellency in Christ, created in me an esteem of him, helped me under such Temptation, strengthened me against such Corruption. But still, saith the Soul, wherein hath he loved me, these are not Tokens of peculiar Love, they are but common things? Now this must needs be a grieving thing to God, when his Tokens and Evidences of peculiar Love shall be thus disparaged, as if they were but Crumbs that he would throw away to an accursed Creature.

(4.) Sometimes Mens not knowing that Christ is in them ariseth from their having *much grieved the Spirit of God: Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, saith the Apostle, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of Redemption, Eph. 4.30.* That Description of the Spirit there, is *argumentative*; *ye are sealed by him to the day of redemption*: It implies, that if we do grieve him we shall obstruct and hinder his *Sealing Work*, which hath this in it, it *evidences* Christ's being in us. Those in whom Christ is therefore, they know not that he is in them sometimes from this Original; this is the cause and root of it, they do much grieve the Spirit of God. The truth is, such is the Folly and Frowardness of the carriage and Heart of many an one in whom Christ is, That the blessed Spirit

Spirit instead of being a *Comforter*, becomes a *Reprover*; and they hear little or nothing but Reproof, bitter, keen and cutting Reproof. And if the Comforter that should relieve their Souls, stand a far off; nay, if he appear only as a Reprover, how Dark, how Dismal must the condition of their Souls be!

Those in whom Christ is, do grieve the Spirit of Christ sometimes by *indulging un-mor-tified Corruption* in themselves: as *wrath, clamor, bitterness, evil speaking*, or the like: The Apostle pointeth at these as things by which the Spirit of God is grieved, in that fore-mentioned Scripture, *Eph. 4. 30*. Sometimes they grieve the Spirit of God by an obstinate and froward *persisting* in a sinful way or frame of heart: for the iniquity of his *Covetousness* I was wroth and smote him, I hid me and was wroth, but he went on frowardly in the way of his Heart, *Isa. 57. 17*. no marvel if God hide his face in such a Case. Sometimes they grieve the Spirit of God by *putting away and refusing* comfort, even when it is brought near to them, offered and put into their Hands, into their Mouths as I may say. The Psalmist taketh notice of this, and condemneth it as his own infirmity and Sin, *Psal. 77. 1, 2*. *I cried unto God with my Voice; and he gave ear unto me.* And was not this comfortable, sweet and satisfying? No saith he, *my Soul refused to be comforted*: But in the Tenth Verse he reflecteth upon it, *this is my infirmity*. He condemneth and shameth himself that his Soul should refuse to be comforted when he had such Tokens and Pledges of the love of God. Sometimes those that have Christ in them grieve the Spirit of God

by *Anxious unbelieving Cares* concerning worldly Matters, and *restraining Prayer*: It is not their daily Practice to disburden their Cares upon God, commit their concernments to God, and leave them with him as the Apostle directs, *Phil. 4. 6, 7. be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*: what shall be the benefit of it? The *Peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your Hearts and Minds through Christ Jesus*. It holdeth out (among other things) the Reason why many a Christian goeth without the Peace of God guarding his Heart; it is this, he *restraineth Prayer before God*: he doth not drive the Trade, and live in the Practice of it, to *make known his Requests by Supplication unto God with thanksgiving*; and this *in every thing*: he maketh it not his Trade to disburden his Care upon God. There are always such evil things as these, in him that knoweth not that Christ is in him: And such things as these are the *Cause and Root* of such his ignorance.

2. There are always *other evils things* in one who has not Assurance, which are the *Fruits* of it. It is it self a Root of bitterness, and it springeth from a bitter and poisonous Root, and it doth always bring forth poysonous and bitter Fruit. There is no Christian that liveth without knowing that Christ is in him, but from this very thing other evils spring up that are very offensive to God.

Let me instance in two or three.

(1.) *An aptness and proneness to distempered workings of Spirit.*

[1] He is apt to be *sluggish and weary in the Work and Ways of God*, he is apt to move heavily

heavily therein, the Apostle laboured whether present or absent to be accepted of God: 2 Cor. 5. 9. but what was the spring of this laboriousness in him? *we are confident, saith he, and willing* ver. 6, 8. Confident of what? That if absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord: *we know, ver. 1. that we have an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens, which we shall be clothed with when this earthly Tabernacle is dissolved:* This made him so laborious to please God, and find acceptance with him. And so again, 1 Cor. 15. 58. *Brethren be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* If a Christian knoweth that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, that knowledge will animate and Spirit him to be stedfast, unmovable and abounding in the Work of the Lord: but he that wants that Assurance knoweth not but all his labour shall be lost. 1 Cor. 9. 26. *I run* saith the Apostle; but how did he run and strive and fight? *Not as uncertainly, not as one beating the Air.* No, he had the prize in his Eye, the recompence of reward which he was assured of. But while a Soul is uncertain and in the Dark, he must needs be subject to weariness and hanging down of his Hands, his Knees waxing feeble in the ways and Work of God.

[2.] One that knoweth not that Christ is in him is *subject to misconstrue the ways of God towards him.* All the Providences and Dispensations of God he is apt to misjudge and put an evil and hard interpretation on. For if the Providence of God be *favourable and smiling,*

his Heart is apt to be full of such thoughts, *what manner of Mercys are these?* Are they out of love, from Fatherly love, or only to fatten me for Slaughter? If the Providences of God be *afflictive* and Dark, he is apt to put severe and dreadful misconstructions upon them, and say, these are because God is angry, unappeased, hath a Controversie with me; they come from Law-wrath, from the Curse and Vengeance of it. Such evil workings of Spirit is that Christian subject to who knoweth not that Christ is in him.

(2.) He is not only subject to such evil Working of Spirit, but *he is subject to total Omissions and Neglects of very necessary and comfortable duties.* It is a duty which is as peremptorily enjoined as any other duty what-so-ever upon a Christian, *to rejoice evermore,* 1 Thes. 5. 16. *rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say Rejoice.* Phil. 4. 4. and 3. 1. But he that knoweth not that Christ is in him he cannot rejoice, he walketh *sadly*, and bowed down, and that continually. It is a Duty enjoined on Christians that they should be enlarged in *praises and thanksgiving* to God and Christ for *electing Love and redeeming Grace*; and in a word, for *all* he hath done for their Souls: you find the Apostle in all his Epistles breaking forth in blessing God on this account. He that knoweth not that Christ is in him cannot do this Work, cannot discharge this Duty; there are no songs of Praise in his Mouth unto the *Lamb*, and *him that sits upon the Throne*, no Hallelujahs, no Rejoicings and Triumphings in God for that loving Kindness of his: It is impossible there should, while he is in the Dark

Dark whether Christ be in him or no. It is a duty enjoined on Christians, that they should be *above the fear of Death*, and be able with the Apostle to say, *O Death where is thy Sting; O Grave where is thy Victory?* 1 Cor. 15. 55. Job was got above it, Job 19. 25, 26, 27. when he said, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c.* But he that knoweth not that Christ is in him, is *in bondage through the fear of Death*: It is impossible it should be otherwise. Yea, God requireth a Christian should be *much* in the Practice of *these*, and such like Duties, and that his Heart should be *always* in Frame and Tune for them: but he that knoweth not that Christ is in him, is unavoidably restrained and kept back from these services, never performeth them, never rendereth them unto God,

(3.) Not knowing that Christ is in a Man bringeth forth another evil Fruit. *It doth debase and defile, and make exceeding defective the service and obedience which such an one doth perform to God.* It is true, one who knoweth not that Christ is in him, may possibly act in sincerity, so as to be accepted with God; he may walk and persevere in the ways of God from the mighty influences of the Lord holding him up: But the service he rendereth to the Lord hath a sad debasing mixture of slavishness and servileness in it: It flows not from such a Son-like Spirit, nor is performed in such an Evangelical manner as it should be. To instance in the duty of *Prayer*: One that *walketh in darkness and seeth no light*, may possibly abound in Prayer, may be much at that work: but *how* doth he Pray? Sometimes he is under sad *straitnings*: the Psalmist ob-

served it in himself he was *so troubled he could not speak*, Psal. 77. 4. Or at best there is not that *confidence* and holy boldness in his access to God; there is not that familiarity, humble familiarity in his applying to God and dealing with God which the Covenant of Grace giveth ground and encouragement for. Ordinances of God may be conscientiously attended by one that knoweth not that Christ is in him; but yet there is a sad defect even in his attending upon Ordinances; whereas *David* resolved he would go unto the Altar of God, unto God his exceeding joy, Psal. 43. 4. So a Christian in all his addresses unto, and attendances upon God in Ordinances, should do it with *delight* in God, as his exceeding Joy. But one who knoweth not that Christ is in him, cannot take delight and Joy in God, in drawing near unto him.

APPLICATION.

1. If they be blame-worthy and to be reproved who do not know that Christ is in them; what then are they who are careless about it? what are they who oppose, resist, and fight against it? What then are they who go up and down with prevailing Fear and secret smothered Convictions that Christ is not in them? and this under a profession, it may be an eminent Profession of being in him?

2. This Point serves to answer and confute all the Pleas and Allegations of Christians, whereby they would excuse their living without Assurance, without knowing that Christ is in them.

It is a Privilege, saith one, and how can it be my Sin and Blame not to have it? It is true, it is in some sence a Privilege and Favour, a Favour which is not actually communicated unto all the Children of God: But if by a Privilege you mean that for which there is no Provision made, no Means laid down in common before the Children of God in the Covenant of Grace for attaining it; it is false. God hath provided Means for it, and he doth in ordinary vouchsafe it unto those that are faithful and diligent in the use of those Means. Do you give diligence to make your Calling and Election sure, and you will find God will not be behind hand with you.

But saith another, It is dispensed *arbitrarily*. God giveth *Assurance* to whom he will, and he with-holds it from whom he will. Deceive not your selves with that Thought. If by *arbitrarily* you mean, that God dispenseth the knowledge that Christ is in a Man *so*, as that he hath given us no *encouragement* to expect it, no *promise* about it, ordained no *Means* for the attaining of it; it is not true, to say it is dispensed *arbitrarily*. God indeed worketh Miracles *arbitrarily* in *that* sence; he hath ordained no Means for us to use and wait upon him in, nor made any Promise for the working of them; yet even *this* doth not tye or limit his Hand but he may work Miracles: This Knowledge that Christ is in a Man is not dispenced *arbitrarily* in this sence. But if by *arbitrary* you mean, that *Assurance* is actually given to, and enjoyed by *some*, and not by *others* of the Children of God; and that it is given by the Lord in a way of unsearchable

and uncontrollable Sovereignty: So indeed it is true, it is given arbitrarily: Yet what is so given, may be thy *Duty* to have, and thy *sin* to live without. Such and such Measures of Grace are given arbitrarily; upholding in particular Hours of Temptation is given arbitrarily in that sense; yet if you fall short of such Measures of Sanctification, it is your *Sin*; your Conscience ought to arraign and condemn you for it: So it is in this Case.

But saith a Third, *It is the Spirit's work to make me know that Christ is in me.* It is true, it is the Spirit's work to make you know it; but yet it is your *Duty* to know it. And besides, *that* which is the work of the Spirit to bring thee to, may be thy *Sin* to fall short of. Regenerating Grace, converting Grace is the work of the Spirit to create and beget in thy heart; yet thou shalt be damned if thou goest without it. To make a Soul believe on Christ, is the work of the Spirit; yet if thou believest not thou shalt be damned. There are things which are the work of the Spirit to bring about in Men, and which without him will never be; yet to miss and fall short of them is their *Sin*, and in some Cases a damning *Sin*. So in this business of Assurance and Knowledge that Christ is in thee, it is the work of the Spirit; yet to be without it is your own *Sin* nevertheless.

A Fourth saith, *It is not essential, it is only ornamental to a Christian to know that Christ is in him, or only comfortable at most.* It is not essential to his being a *Christian*, and consequently not to his *Salvation*. That which one in Christ may possibly for some time be without,

out, is not essential either to him, or his Salvation; But one in Christ may possibly for some time be without the knowledge that Christ is in him. I answer, Tho' it be not essential, but only comfortable or ornamental to thee; yet it may be thy Sin to be without it: For it may be thy Duty to have *that* which is but an Ornament to a Believer. Such a *measure*, such a *lustre* of Grace is not essential, but only ornamental; yet it is thy Sin to be without it. Tho' it be not essential to your Salvation, yet if it make any addition unto the Comfort and Triumph of your Salvation, the Holy Ghost judgeth that very Consideration should have its weight, 2 Pet. 1. 10, 11. *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, so shall ye never fall, and so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Pray mark here, the Holy Ghost doth not say, so shall an entrance be ministered; but the expression is, *so shall an entrance be ministered to you abundantly into the Kingdom of Christ.* He doth not hang Salvation and Heaven upon it; but he hangeth the *abundance* of your entrance into Heaven upon it. The Expression, I think, is an Allusion unto the Triumphant Entries of great Commanders and Captains, who when they had been abroad and returned Conquerors to their own Cities, had an Entrance into the City furnished to them at the Publick Charge, a Splendid Magnificent Entrance. This the Apostle alludeth to, and setteth before them; not a bare naked entering into Heaven, but a Splendid, Magnificent Entrance into Heaven: And this shall be furnished

nished out unto them at the charge of Grace, at the charge of Christ; *such* an Entrance shall be furnished out for them. This should have its weight with a Christian: And indeed it will with a Son-like Ingenuous Spirit. It is a base vile Spirit in any one that professeth himself to be a Child of God, to take up with *that* which is essential to Salvation, to aspire after no more than that which is absolutely of necessity to get to Heaven; if he can but get to Heaven and escape Hell at last, to care for no more, how unworthy, how base and disingenious is this? Knowing that Christ is in thee tho it be not of *absolute* necessity unto thy *Salvation*; yet there is a *real* and *manifold* necessity of it: There is a necessity of it, not only as *enjoined* and made thy *Duty* by God, but there is a necessity of it as a *means* in order to thy glorifying of Christ and Free Grace here, in order to thy adorning the Gospel you make Profession of, in order to thy shewing forth the Praises of him by whom thou art called, in order to thy comfortable walking with God, by communion with Him, and enjoying of Him here, and in order to thy Triumphant Entrance into the Eternal Kingdom of God hereafter. And shall none of these things awaken thee, or put thee upon diligence and pains and labouring after it?

3. Unto those who *do not know that Christ is in them*, this Doctrine speaketh two things.

(1.) *Be Jealous concerning your selves*: and take in, and fall under the Conviction of this evil thing for which you are *blame-worthy* before God. In his Judgment you are *unapproved*, there is much amiss in you, because ye do not know

know that Christ is in you. It may be he is not in you. Or if he be, either you are slothful and negligent, or indifferent to know it; or the evidences and discoveries of it are low and feeble; or you are unskilful in reading and improving of them: And besides the evil of the thing it self, there are other evils which always accompany this: It is a poysonous Root, and bringeth forth poysonous Fruit. Let me point yet farther at a thing or two, which are the common and constant Fruits of not knowing that Christ is in thee. Thy Spirit *shunneth the presence of God*: Thou hast no delight in applying to him and dealing with him: you may be constrained to come, but when thou art before him, there are sad restraints often, nay ordinarily upon thy Heart; and besides the restraints which are upon thee when thou art before him, there is sometimes an astonishing *aversion* and hanging back from going into Gods Presence: Thou mayest thank thy not knowing that Christ is in thee for this: That is the root of it. Again, it may be thou art *useless in thy place*; no body is the better for thee: Thank thy not knowing Christ is in thee, for thy barrenness. *Psal. 51. 8. 12, 13.* David beggeth that the Bones which God had broken might rejoice, and that he would restore the Joy of Salvation: Then, saith he, *will I teach Transgressors thy ways, and Sinners shall be converted unto thee.* He found he was out of Case for usefulness to other Souls while he was under darkness in his own Spirit. Furthermore, it may be you find sometimes *dismal hardness upon your own Hearts*: you go into Gods Presence, tell him Stories against your selves, confess

feels your guiltiness before him: but it is with such remorseless and unrelenting Hearts as is astonishing: For this hardness of Heart you must thank your not knowing that Christ is in you. For if *that* were once cleared up in thy Conscience, and that God hath forgiven all thy Sins, if thou couldest see that God hath put thee into his Bosom and smiled upon thy Soul; such a sense of his Love would melt and thaw, and dissolve thy Soul after another manner than ever yet you have had Experience of.

(2.) You that walk without knowing that Christ is in you, *Be humbled under it.* You are certainly guilty before God; guilty on the account of *this ignorance*, guilty on the account of *other things of Belial* which are in you; ye should therefore humble your selves before God. Yea, you who do in some measure know it, yet should be humbled that you know it no more; no more clearly, no more assuredly. Yea, you that know it now with comfortable clearness, you should remember the days of darkness, when you knew it not; you should humble your selves, that you lived so long before you knew that Christ was in you.

4. To wind up what I designed to say upon this Text, *Let it awaken all to labour after this Knowledge; to know whether Christ be in you or no.* Do not sit down with faint and languid Hopes, much less be careless about it; but press after knowing that Christ is in you, with such a like over-powering certainty, as that wherewith you know that Sin dwelleth in you, or Corruption worketh in you. Now, if you say, how may a Soul come thus to know that Christ is in him?

I Answer, There are Four Things, which are, as I may call them, the Principles out of which the knowledge that Christ is in a Man doth grow up. And thence there are Four Directions which I shall leave with you about it.

1. One thing from which Assurance and Knowledge that Christ is in a Man groweth up, is this (and it is the prime and fundamental thing.) *A saving work of Grace upon the Soul.* Without *this* there is no knowing it. And therefore the First Direction I would give is this, *Be sure that thy heart be made perfect with God in the great Work of Regeneration.* Lay out thy Self and thy Endeavours there, bend them *that way*, make thy Heart perfect with God in the great business of Regeneration and Conversion: Unless there be Grace in your Heart, you can never know that Christ is in you. And unless that Grace be *acted and exercised*, and that at such a rate, as in some measure *to lift its head above Corruption*, it will never be clear unto thy own Soul. Make thy Heart therefore perfect with God in the business of Regeneration and Conversion.

2. Another thing from which Assurance groweth up is *the Word of the Gospel*, the word of *promise*, which saith *such and such* have Christ in them; those that *believe*, those that *are sanctified*, and *regenerate* have Christ in them.

Hence the Direction is, *Strengthen thy Faith in the Word of Promise.* It is often from secret staggerings concerning *that*, that many Christians are not able to come to a settlement whether Christ be in them or not. What the Word of the Gospel speaketh, *God speaketh*; and

and you should take the Sentence of God, the Sentence of his Word will abide for ever, it will hold good and stand firm when thy naked Soul shall come to stand at the Tribunal of God.

3. Knowing that Christ is in a Man groweth up from the discerning and reflection of his own Conscience, and the testimony thereof concerning it. Hence the Third Direction is, *Clear up the Eye of Conscience.* Do not suffer that to ly under darkness or under impostures from Satan; but see that Conscience bring in a Verdict and Sentence, and that positive and peremptory: put it upon speaking out: You will never know that Christ is in you, unless Conscience be put into the Throne, unless it have its commission to speak, and speak in the Name of God, and speak home to the Point.

4. There is another thing from which knowing that Christ is in a Man doth spring up, and that is the comforting work of the Holy Ghost. He must shew us the things which are freely given us of God, or else we shall not discern them. The fourth Direction therefore is, *Engage the assistance and presence of the Spirit of God the Comforter with you in this thing.* You may search your own Hearts long enough, and all that hath past between your Souls and God: but it will all be labouring in the very fire, and wearying your selves for very vanity, unless the Spirit of God as a comforting and witnessing Spirit set his Seal to it, and come and make it out, by declaring to thy Soul that Christ is indeed in you.

These are great and precious Truths, certain Truths of God, which are, as I call them, the Principles of Assurance and Knowledge that

that Christ is in a Man. They deserve to be lookt into and considered by us: And if God give opportunity I may possibly take them up, and speak to them hereafter one by one, as the Lord shall give life and strength.

S E R M O N X V I.

I J O H N III. 14.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

IN the Close of my last Discourse in this Place you may remember I told you there are *four* Things which are as the *Principles* from which *Assurance* or Knowledge that Christ is in a Man doth arise and grow up: Namely,

A work of *special Grace* upon the Heart.

The *Word of Promise* in the Gospel.

The *reflection* and discerning of it by a Mans own *Conscience*.

The *influence* of the blessed Spirit as a Spirit of Peace and Assurance.

I purpose if the Lord lengthen out life, to speak somewhat to each of these four things and shew the influence which they have upon Assurance. And that I may speak somewhat to the *First* of them I have pitched upon these words.

words. The principal scope of *John* in this Epistle is to promote and help the *Assurance* and *Joy* of Believers: So himself tells us, *Chap. 1.4. These things write we unto you, that your Joy may be full: and Chap. 5. 13. he concludes his Epistle with the same thing, These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have Eternal Life.* This being the more eminent scope of the Apostle in writing this Epistle, hence it is that it is full of *Directions* about it, and full of *Signs* and *Evidences* for a Believers help in discerning his own spiritual Condition. Among the rest ye have *one Sign* mentioned in this place: where you find the Apostle tells them that he, and other Believers in his day, did *know* that they had passed from Death to Life *because they loved the Brethren.*

Ye have two things in these words.

1. The *Subject* of them, the *Persons* spoken of, and that is *We*. He meaneth not only *we Apostles*; but himself and other *Believers*.

2. Ye have the *Thing* which he affirms of himself and other Believers, *they knew that they were passed from Death to Life.* And here are two things.

(1.) Their *Attainment*: or that which they did enjoy. They *knew* they were passed from Death to Life.

(2.) The *Means* of that attainment: *because they love the Brethren.* That word *because* referreth and looketh back, not upon their *passing* from Death to Life; but upon their *knowing* of it: He meaneth not, that they past from Death to Life either *by* or *because* of their loving the Brethren; but that they *knew* they were passed from Death to Life *by this.* There

There are many Observations contained and couched in the Words : Let me mention a few of them.

1. *The first Estate even of the saved ones of God is a State of Death.* This is plainly held out to us, in that the Apostle saith of himself and other saved ones that they were *passed from Death* : In a State of Death then they had once been.

2. *There is a blessed change of State made upon all Believers, upon all the saved ones of God.* They were once in a State of Death : but they are brought and translated into a State of Life.

3. *This blessed Change made by God upon his chosen Ones lieth in this, they are in a State of Life* : They are past from Death to Life.

4. *This blessed Change wherein Gods Elect pass from Death to Life may be known.* We know (saith he) that we are past from Death to Life.

5. *Believers upon whom God hath wrought this blessed happy Change should, even when it is wrought and brought about upon them, remember their former Estate.* They should reflect upon that and review what it was, and withal reflect upon their present happy State ; and see the wofulness of the one, and the blessedness of the other. The Apostle doth not here barely assert that they were *now* in a State of Life ; but he setteth before their Eyes and bringeth to their remembrance what their former Estate had been : *We have past*, saith he, *from Death*, and withal telleth them what their present Estate is, *unto Life*.

These, tho' useful, tho' precious Truths, I shall

shall not insist upon: But come immediately to that which is my present Scope.

John and other Believers knew their present State, that it was a State of Life. But withal he tells you how they came to know it, and what was the means thereof: because, saith he, we love the Brethren. Therefore the Doctrine I would observe from it, and insist upon a little, is this.

A Work of special Grace wrought upon the Heart, is a means whereby a Believer may know that he is in a State of Grace. Or Briefly, A Work of Grace is a means of Assurance.

'Tis true, the Apostle here mentioneth but one peice of a Work of Grace, namely, love to the Brethren: but there is a like reason concerning all the rest. And if it hold true concerning this, as the Text asserteth and confirmeth it doth, 'tis in like manner true concerning any other part or passage of a Work of Heart-changing Grace; that it is a means by which a believer may come to know he is in a State of Grace, ver. 18. 19. of this Chapter, the Apostle saith, if we love indeed and in truth, and not in word only; what then? We shall by that means, saith he, know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our Hearts before God; and shall have confidence towards God, ver. 21. Confidence is a sweet Perswasion settled in the Heart concerning our acceptance with God and Gods free Favour.

In handling this Doctrine, I design, 1. To Explain it. 2. To Confirm it. 3. To Answer Objections. 4. To Apply it.

Four things I will speak to for Explication.

1. What is meant by a change of State, or a State of Grace. 2. What

II. What is this *Work of Grace upon the Heart*, or Heart-changing Grace, which is a means of Assurance, and of knowing that our State is changed?

III. What kind of Knowledge is it concerning a State of Grace that a Believer may have by discerning a Work of Heart-changing Grace upon his own Soul?

IV. How and in what way is a Work of Heart-changing Grace a means of Assurance or Knowledge of a State of Grace?

I. What is meant here by a State of Grace? A State of Grace lieth in the change of our Covenant: When a Soul doth no longer stand under the Covenant of Works, but is brought under the bond of the Covenant of Grace, then the State is changed. This change of Covenant includeth and implyeth the change of a Mans Head. Under the Covenant of Works the first Adam is the Head of all his Seed: But under the Covenant of Grace you know the Son of God the second Adam is constituted the Head of all his Seed. A change of State therefore is when the Soul is cut off from the old Adam, and standeth no longer under him, or his Covenant; but is ingrafted into Christ the second Adam, and hence inwrapped and involved in his Covenant under him as his Covenant-Head. The first and fundamental thing therefore in a State of Grace is Union unto Christ: I say that is the first and fundamental thing in a State of Grace. And when I speak of Union to Christ, I mean that saving vital Union whereinto all Believers are brought; and which is brought about by Christ's apprehending us, and causing us reciprocally to apprehend

prehend and lay hold on him. The Scripture calleth it our being *in Christ*, *Rom. 8. 1. & 16, 7.* It is likewise expressed by Christ's being in us, *Col. 1. 27. Christ in you the hope of Glory. Jesus Christ is in you, 2 Cor. 13. 5.* And the reason why it is sometimes expressed on one side, and sometimes on the other, sometimes it is called *our* being in Christ, and sometimes *Christ* being in us, is because this In-being is *mutual*, *John 14. 20. at that day ye shall know that you are in me, and I in you*: I say this In-being between Believers and Christ is *mutual*. Believers therefore stand related to Christ as *members* of him, and as *Espoused* and *Married* to him. *Members* of Christ: their very *Bodies* are called *Members of Christ*, *1 Cor. 6. 15.* how much more are their *Persons* so? And they are *Married* and *Espoused* to Christ *Rom. 7. 4. ye are dead to the Law by the body of Christ, that ye should be Married unto him who is raised from the Dead.* Now this *Espousal*, *Betrothing*, or *Marrying* of Believers unto Christ, is immutable and irreverfable, *Hos. 2. 19. 20. I will betroth thee unto me for ever in Righteousness, and in Judgment, and in Loving-kindness and in Mercies.*

This Union to Christ, being the prime and fundamental thing in a State of Grace; it hath flowing from it, and following upon it, these other things, which are also comprised under it, *Justification*, *Reconciliation*, and *Adoption*.

1. *Justification*: Wherein Sin is pardoned, and the Person is constituted righteous, and made accepted unto Eternal Life. But still, this being constituted Righteous, and accepted unto Eternal Life, it is *in Christ*, it is in and under him as Head: So the Apostle to the *Romans*, chap. 8. 1. *There is no Condemnation; To whom? To them*

them that are in Christ Jesus. That is the immediate Root, from which freedom from Condemnation doth grow up, their being in Christ: For hence it is, that his Righteousness is upon them; that I may be found in Christ, saith the Apostle, Phil 3. 9. Found in Christ not having mine own Righteousness,—but the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.

2. Hence also followeth *Reconciliation*: Which is sometimes taken for that which was effected at the Death of Christ: God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, 2 Cor. 5. 19. But it sometimes signifieth that part of a Believers State of Grace wherein he is made a friend of God. So Christ stileth his Disciples, ye are my Friends, John 15. 14, 15. And so God stileth Abraham, Abraham my Friend, Isa. 41. 8. To be a Friend of God, is somewhat more than to be justified by God. If a Criminal be arraigned at the Bar; suppose him to be acquitted and cleared, this is a great thing: But to have the Judge or Prince, before whom he is arraigned, to take him into his familiarity, and make him his favourite, this is somewhat further. So it is in this Case: In Justification we are acquitted, yea, we are constituted Righteous: But in Reconciliation, we are as I may say made near unto God, his Favourites and Friends, and he becometh familiar with us, and admitteth us into familiarity with him. And thus we have through the Faith of Christ, through the conduct and influence of the Spirit of Christ, boldness and access, with confidence before the Father, Eph. 3. 12. We have leave and liberty to Address to God as Friends, in a close familiarity, and a blessed holy boldness, according

cording to the gracious tenour of the Covenant of Grace.

3. Another part of that *State* of Grace, which a Believer may know by a *Work* of special Grace upon his own Heart, is *Adoption*. Of which I must say as of the former, it is still in *Christ*, with an Eye and Reference to *Him*, as standing in *Christ*, as under him as our Head. Adoption is that whereby, and wherein the bastardy and taint of our Blood, which was brought upon us by *Adam's* Rebellion is taken off, and we are invested in that Priviledge of being the *Sons of God*, in Conformity unto the Eternal Son of God: We are now no more strangers and foreigners unto God, no more shut out and banished from his presence, that taint is taken off, and we are of the *Household of God*, *Eph. 2. 19*. We are invested in that Priviledge of being the Sons of God, ye are all the Children of God by Faith in *Christ Jesus*, *Gal. 3. 26*. God maketh us the Sons and Daughters of the Lord God Almighty, *2 Cor. 6. 18*. This Priviledge is conferred upon all Believers, *John 1. 12*. To as many as received him, he gave Right or Priviledge to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name. A high and Glorious Priviledge it is: This Apostle therefore in the First Verse of this Chapter where my Text is, calleth Believers to stand and wonder at it; Behold, saith he, what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God! And well it may be wondred at; for it is a Sonship, in some respect, after the Pattern and Image of the eternal Sonship of the Son of God: We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the son of God, *Rom. 8. 29*.

There

There is, and will be to Eternity, a vast Difference and Distance between our Sonship and Christ's : But yet our Sonship is, as I may say, cast in the Mould of his Sonship ; we are made Sons in Conformity and Likeness to him. This Sonship of ours bringeth along with it, and includeth in it an *Heirship* unto God, an Heirship of Glory, a Coheirship with Christ ; the Apostle hath them all together, *Rom. 8.*
17.

Now in this State of Grace, the Fundamental Leading Thing being our *Union* to Christ, which compriseth and hath following upon it *Justification, Reconciliation, and Adoption* : And this State being designed and purposed by God from *Everlasting*, and being also conferred by God for ever upon the Believer : Hence a Believer's Assurance, or knowing his State of Grace, doth not only reflect upon his Condition and Standing at *present* ; but it looketh *backward* and *forward* ; it compriseth and vieweth at once *two Eternities*. It vieweth its *present* State, and the Soul can say, I am a *Member* of Christ, and, being a Member of Christ, am *justified*, accepted to Eternal Life, made a *Friend*, yea, a *Son* and *Daughter* of the Living God. And it resteth not there, it is not confined within those Limits of a Man's present State ; but it looketh *backwards* to Eternity : I was in the Heart of God from *Everlasting*, chosen, designed, and appointed hereunto, and that before all Worlds ; yea, I was covenanted for between the Father and the Son, and my Name made mention of in those Transactions between the blessed God and the blessed Redeemer before all Worlds : Yea, also when

this Knowledge of a Believer's State is extended to its due and just Comprehensiveness, the Soul vieweth its own Name engraven upon the Heart of Christ, and upon his Shoulders, in his Sufferings and his Interceding ; I was one of the redeemed Ones of Christ, whom he remembered when he hung upon the Cross, and whom he doth now make mention of, and the Causes of whose Soul he doth continually manage before his God and Father in Heaven. This State of Grace being conferred upon him, for Eternity ; hence also, when a Believer's Knowledge extendeth to a just View and Survey of it, he looketh *forward* also ; not backward only, or only unto his present State, I am a Member of Christ, justified, reconciled, made a Child of God ; but he adds, *This is for ever*, I am instated in this *for ever*, and I shall be so *continually* ; I shall be *preserved in Jesus Christ*, Jude 1. *and delivered from every evil work, the Lord will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom*, 2 Tim. 4. 18. This is that State of a Believer which is a *State of Grace*, and which a Work of special Grace is a Means of his knowing. And this brings me to the Second General.

II. *What is this Work of special Grace upon the Heart, which is a Means of knowing a State of Grace ?* It is that Work of God's Power and Grace upon the Soul, whereby the *Heart* is changed. Look as in the *State of Grace*, the *Covenant* is changed ; so in this *Work of Grace* the *Image* or the *Frame* of the Heart is changed. Look as the *State of Grace* consisteth in a *Relation* to Christ as the Head of the New Covenant ; so this *Work of Grace* upon the Soul

is nothing else but *Heart-changing Impressions* and Influences, communicated from Christ as the Head of that Covenant: For as the *Depravedness* and *Pervertedness* of our Spirits came upon us from our first Father *Adam*, who is to us a Root of Defilement; so our *Renovation*, the Change of our Heart, cometh to us through Christ, who is the Head of all Heart-changing Grace and Holiness. Hence whatever Work is wrought by the Spirit of Christ, from Christ, as the Head of the Second Covenant, whereby the Frame of the Heart is changed, it falleth under *this* that I am speaking of.

Let me a little open this Heart-changing Grace under those Three Particulars which the Apostle mentioneth and joineth together, *Rom. 7. 4. Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to him, who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God.* Somewhat parallel to this is that of the same Apostle, *Phil. 3. 3. We are the circumcision, who have no confidence in the flesh, but rejoice in Christ Jesus, and worship God in the spirit.* And parallel to them both is that Speech of Christ himself, *John 16. 8, 9, 10. I will send the spirit, saith he, and when he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He shall convince of Sin: There is no confidence in the flesh; and likewise the becoming dead to the law by the body of Christ. He shall convince the World of Righteousness: There is rejoicing in Christ Jesus; and there is marrying to him who is raised from the dead. He shall convince the World of Judgment: There is worshipping God in the spirit; and there is bringing forth fruit unto God.*

1. The

1. The first of these some call *preparing* Grace, the second is called *uniting* Grace, and the third is called *conforming* or *communion* Grace. By that word *preparing* Grace they do not mean preparing the Heart for Christ to work upon it; for the Heart never is nor can be unprepared for Christ to take it in hand and deal with it: But by *preparing* they mean *bringing into the next Disposition* to close with Christ and act upon Christ in a way of believing. But I would not use any stumbling Terms: if I may express my own apprehensions about it, I think it is no other but the work of an effectual and saving Call expressed by the *Term from which* the Soul is turned, in its Conversion to God. The second which they call *uniting* Grace is nothing else but the same work expressed by the *Object or Term to which* the Soul is turned and united when it is brought in unto Christ. A Persons becoming *Dead to the Law through the Body of Christ*, is wrought in all the Elect of God: and it is through Vertue and Influence from Christ; yea, from the *Death of Christ*: *Become dead*, saith he, *to the Law by the Body of Christ*, altho' it be much, may mostly wrought by the display and managing of the precept and threatening of the *Law*, as the Instrument and Means thereof; *I through the Law am become dead to the Law*, saith the Apostle, *Gal. 2. 19.* It is that which is commonly called *Repentance*, *Humiliation*, and by such like names in Scripture. The Substance of it lieth in the *divorcing and taking off the Heart from its former Head and Husband*, and the making a separation between the Soul and those things which by Nature it doth and did before cleave unto

unto. By Nature the Soul cleaveth to Sins; they are its Life, its delight: the Apostle calleth them, even in Believers, *their Members which are upon the Earth*, Col. 3. 5. they are as dear as *Right Eyes*, as *Right Hands* unto us naturally: The Apostle telleth us they were as our *Life* in our natural Condition, *in which ye also walked sometimes when ye lived in them*, Col. 3. 7. But the Soul that is wrought upon by special Grace, is divorced from these Sins, it is so convinced of them as to be cut off from them. And the Soul is not only cut off from Sin, but it is cut off from *Self* also: For it is as natural for a Man to turn in to Self, as it is to live in Sin. In that parable, *Luke 15. 14. &c.* about the Returning-Prodigal ye have *this* set forth under that resemblance: When a mighty *Famine* arose in the Land, rather than think of returning, he *goeth and joineth himself to a Citizen of that Country*, and there he was contented to live upon Hogs-Meat. A Soul convinced by some workings of the Spirit upon his Conscience, of the danger and dreadful evil of Sin, is naturally prone to turn in unto *himself*, and seek to *establish a righteousness of his own*, as the Apostle noteth concerning the Jews, *Rom. 10. 3.* rather than *submit to the Righteousness of God*. Now this cutting a Soul off both from Sin, and Self, is a Work of Grace; and it is peculiar to the *Elect* and saved Ones of God: for there is never in *any other* the like Work for kind and Nature, to make a separation between their Hearts and all other things except Jesus Christ. Hence the Expressions of *Broken-hearted*, *Poor in Spirit*, and the like, are as true Descriptions of one past from Death

Death to Life, as *believing* is. Not that in *this* work the Soul doth pass from Death to Life, take it by it self: But this, in the true Nature and Kind of it, is inseperable from closing with Christ, and proper and peculiar to those that de believe.

2. Here is *marrying unto Christ who is raised from the Dead*; which Christ calleth *Conviction of righteousness*; and the Apostle termeth *rejoicing in Christ Jesus*. It containeth not only a *discovery* and *sight* of Christ in his sufficiency and suitableness unto the Souls Particular Case and Exigency; but a *winning* and working over of the Heart and all the Affections to *receive, embrace, and close with* this Christ, as thus discovered in the Gospel. And this indeed is it wherein the Knot is knit and the Marriage made up between Christ and the Soul for ever.

3. There is a work of *Sanctification* also in a work of Heart-changing Grace. Sanctification taken strictly and precisely as consequential to Justification; so it is distinguished from the work of *Faith in Vocation*, *Acts 26. 18. that they may receive forgiveness of Sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by Faith that is in me*. Where you see Sanctification is distinguished from Faith; and is nothing else but our being *conformed to the Image of the Son of God*, *Rom. 8. 29*. And therefore some call it *Conforming Grace*; Christ calleth it *Conviction of Judgment*. It is nothing else but the *implanting into the Soul that habitual Principle of Holiness*, whereby it is *conformed unto the Image and Will of God*: so the Apostle tells us, *Col. 3. 10. that the new Man is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him that created him*. It is some-

sometimes called a *Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. A *Nature* because of its Influence and Operation, it is an active, inward, operative Principle: and it is called *Divine*, because of its Original and Resemblance; it cometh from God, and in it consisteth our likeness to God. This work of Sanctification is considered either in the *Habit* and Principle of it, and that is commonly and very fitly called Sanctification: Or else in the *acting* and exercise of it, and that is called Holiness or Obedience. And this acting and exercise of the Principle of Grace and Sanctification, if it be *inward* in the Bosom, it is called *exercise of Grace*: if it be *external*, it is called *fruits of Righteousness*, fruits of Obedience, and the like.

Now then by this you may see what is that work of *Heart-changing Grace* by which a Believer may come to know his *State of Grace*: It is that work of God wherein Impressions and Influences from Christ are made, and the second Covenant taketh an abiding and everlasting hold upon the Heart, to bring it and mould it into another Frame.

III. *What kind of Knowledge is this that a Believer may have of his State of Grace, by such a work of Grace upon his own Soul?* I have, not long ago, in this place spoken somewhat about it, I will now content my self with mentioning two or three things.

1. It is a knowledge of *Discerning and Judgment*.

2. It is a knowledge of *Faith*.

3. It is a knowledge of *Spiritual Sense*. Yet none of these are *Perfect*.

1. *It is a knowledge of Discerning and Judgment.*

ment. It is not barely an assent of the mind unto this, *that my State is changed*; but it is such a discerning and *sight* hereof wherein the Soul goeth upon grounds of Proof and Demonstration, and is able to render a reason and account of this its assent. So the Holy Ghost expresseth it, *1 Pet. 3. 15. be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.* It is not a blind assent and taking up this Conceit, that my State is good; but the Believer *feeleth* his ground under him, and he *knoweth* and discerneth why he thus concludeth. It is indeed a collection concluded in a way of reasoning, to render a reason, saith the Holy Ghost: I say a conclusion collected in a way of *spiritual reasoning*: there is always in it a *Syllogism*; tho' it may be the actings of the Soul are so quick and nimble that it taketh not notice in it self of some part of the Syllogism: but it is always, I say, in a syllogistical way. The Soul assenteth to this as the Conclusion, *I am in a State of Life*: but it doth it upon grounds of Proof and Demonstration; It can *render a reason*, and it *discerneth why* it so concludeth. It is true, in this discerning it doth not act meerly its *natural abilities*: For it is the Judgment of a *sanctified renewed Conscience*: and besides, it is the Judgment which Conscience maketh under the actual Illumination and Conduct of the *Holy Spirit* as a Comforter; as I may shew hereafter.

2. *There is Faith as well as Discearning or Judgment; the assent is an assent of Faith.* 'Tis therefore called the *Assurance of Faith*, *Heb. 10. 22.* And a being perswaded, *Rom. 8. 38. I am perswaded*: And so the Apostle, *John 1 Epist. 3. 19. We shall*

shall assure our Hearts before God; we shall persuade our Hearts, as the Word he there useth signifieth: and in the Sixteenth Verse of the next Chapter, ye have both Knowledge and Faith joined together; *We have known and believed the love of God to us.* And it must needs be a Knowledge accompanied with Faith, because it is grounded upon a Divine Revelation and Testimony. The first Proposition in the Syllogism of Assurance is always a Divine Testimony; it is some Word of God, some Word of Promise, or the like, and that hath greatest Influence into the Conclusion: Yea, sometimes the very Assumption, in the Syllogism of Assurance, is a Divine Testimony; therefore the Conclusion is an Assent of Faith, not so immediately indeed as that Assent which is given unto the Proposition in the Syllogism of Assurance, or unto other Truths of Divine Revelation: But yet an Assent of Faith it is, such an Assent of Faith as that which is given by the Soul concerning its own being brought to Judgment, and concerning the Resurrection of the Body.

3. There is also a spiritual Sense accompanying this Knowledge. The Believer knoweth that his Estate is a happy and blessed Estate: And he not only knoweth it, but he hath some Taste and Relish of that Happiness which he knoweth. There is an inward experimental Feeling of these spiritual and heavenly Things in this Judgment and Knowledge. Besides, the Soul feeleth the Work of Grace upon it self: He that doth truly believe, he feeleth within himself and in his Heart, that he doth believe, his Conscience bearing witness thereunto.

Yet neither this Sense, nor this Faith, nor this

this *Discerning* and *Judgment*, are *perfect*. *Knowing* a Man's good Estate is a Piece of *Sanctification*, and one of the Graces of the Holy Spirit: It is therefore *imperfect*, as all other Parts of Sanctification and all other Graces are. And hence it being *imperfect*, it is *variable*; it hath different Degrees in different Believers, yea, in the same Believer at different Times. Hence one that hath had it, may lose it in a great measure: *David* had so lost it, when he prayed that God would *restore unto him the joy of his salvation*, Psal. 51. 12. Mark the Expression: It is not, that God would *give* him; but, that God would *restore* unto him; which implieth he once had more of it than now he felt.

APPLICATION.

If this be true, That a Work of Heart-changing Grace, saving Special Grace, is a Means of knowing a Man's happy and good Estate, it sheweth you *what is one thing which standeth between the Peace of God and many a Soul*. It is either a *total Want*, or some *great Defect* in a Work of Heart-changing Grace; there it lieth. Thou *walkest up and down in Darknes*, and *seest no Light*; art full of Trouble, it may be, and hast no Peace: But what is the Reason of it? This is one thing in it; there is either a *total Want*, or a *great Defect* in Heart-changing Grace.

May be there is a *total Want*. It is so with too many that have a Name to live, and make a Profession, and keep Company with the Saints; but yet there is a *total Want* within them of *Renewing Grace*. It was so with those *foolish*

Virgins

Virgins, Matth. 25. Foolish they were, for they had *no Oil in their Vessels*, and yet took *their Lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom*: They had not only a flattering Perswasion in themselves, that it would be a good Day to them when the Bridegroom should come; but *others* thought well of them too: Yet there was a total Want of any gracious Work upon their Hearts; *they had no Oil*. And the Truth of it is, if there be a total Want of a Work of special Heart-changing Grace, it is Mercy and Faithfulness in God not to let the Soul arrive at Peace; it is one of the greatest Mercies of that kind vouchsafed unto many a Soul in his unregenerate Condition, that God fixeth his Conscience in this Principle, that until there be a Work of saving, special Grace wrought upon his Heart, there is no Change of his State. This Principle fixed in the Conscience, will never let a Man be at Peace in a Way of Sin, and that is an unspeakable, unvaluable Mercy. There is many a foolish, desperate-hearted Creature, that striveth to build up a House of Peace to himself, and daubeth it with untempered Morter: But God, by fixing this Principle in his Conscience, will not let him prosper in that Work of Self-deceiving; but as fast as he buildeth it up, God pulleth it down again, and so maketh the Soul to be in a restless and unquiet Condition. This is Love and Faithfulness in God, that he will not let a Man rest in a State and Way of Sin.

But sometimes it is not a total Want of a Work of Heart-changing Grace, *but it is a great Defectiveness therein*, which is the Cause of

this Want of Assurance. There are woful short-comings in the Work of Heart-changing Grace. It may be it is in that which is the leading thing therein; I mean, *Repentance, Brokenness of Heart, Conviction of Sin, and Humiliation*. I believe that is one Reason why so many of the Professors of the present Generation walk in so much Darkness, and without Assurance: There hath been generally reigning among us a secret Slightness in this Matter. But if there have been no deep, no bitter Heart-breakings for Sin, and Humblings under the Sense of thy own Vileness; no marvel you never arrive at a clear and comfortable Confidence that you are pass'd from Death to Life; That Work of God's Grace which should have been to empty and unbottom thee, hath a great Defectiveness in it. May be it is in *that* which we call *uniting Grace*; I mean *Faith*, closing with Christ. There hath been, it may be, much Slightness and Hollowness of Heart therein, perhaps in thy *first* treating and transacting with God; or, it may be, it hath grown upon thee in the *Course* of thy Profession; thy Heart is grown remiss, and sits loose from Christ; an Unsensibleness of thy Need of Christ hath stolen upon thee, and hence the way of thy Spirit hath not been to make earnest Applications to Christ and to his fulness, daily, for all supplies both for the acceptance of thy Person, and assistance of thy Heart in all thy Duties. Now if Christ be overlooked, and thy Heart be slighty and negligent in transacting with him, it is no wonder if there be no Peace with God in thy Conscience. Or it may be it is in those *consequent Works* of

Gaace,

Grace, *Sanctification* and new Obedience: Possibly there are unmortified Corruptions, and these indulged and suffered to grow up in thy Heart, that thy Heart is like the Sluggards Garden or Field which *Solomon* speaks of, all overgrown with Weeds: No marvel if thy standing in a State of Grace become unevident unto thy Conscience, when the Evidences of thy being in that State are thus overtopped and covered, as I may say, with rank and luxuriant Corruption and Distempers. It may be it is some *Sin* fallen into, and this hath made a breach in the Course of thy Obedience and Holiness. If it be a *great Sin*, a gross and foul Sin which is not the ordinary spot of a Child of God, if it be a Sin fallen into against light, no marvel there is no Peace of God in thy Heart: No, such a Sin contracteth such guilt, and will set thy Conscience so a flaming, as to kindle an Hell within thy Bosom; and till the Lord come and recover thee to a renewed Repentance and Application unto that Fountain set open for Sin, there will be no Peace. May be it is not any such gross and foul Sin: Ay, but there are *little Sins*, little comparatively, and those *little Sins* of thine are slighted, neglected, made light of; you see them, but despise them, Mourn not under them, bear them not as your burden, feel them not, they are not wounding things, thy Heart never bleeds under them, you lament them not, complain not of them, never judge and abhor your self for them; then those little Sins, tho' but of unavoidable infirmity, will break thy Peace: The reason is, because they make the Work of Grace obscure, and besides, they grieve the

Spirit of God: For they are not only gross Sins, but also little Sins neglected, which will do this; when the Heart is in an unevangelical Frame, in a carnal, legal Frame, these little Sins grieve the Spirit of God. I conclude therefore with beseeching all of you that walk in Darkness, and inward trouble, doubts and irresolution about your State, to consider and enquire within your selves, doth it not lie here, is not this the great Cause of it; there is either a total want, or a great defect in the Work of Heart-changing Grace upon thee? If *that* were clear, if *that* were more perfect and evident unto thy Conscience, the Peace of God would spring up there, you would be able to walk in the light of his Countenance continually.

S E R M O N XVII.

I J O H N III. 14.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

THE Doctrine I observed from these Words was this.

*A work of special Grace in the Heart is a means
for*

for a Believer to know that he is past from Death to Life. In short, *A Work of Grace is a means of Assurance.*

Four Things were proposed to be spoken for the *Explication* of the Point. And then will follow the *Confirmation* or making out the *Truth* of it. The removing *Objections*. And lastly the *Application*.

Of the Four things proposed for *Explication*. Three have been dispatched.

Let me come now to the Fourth.

IV. *How is a Work of Grace on the Heart, the means of knowing a Mans good Estate?* That I may not be mistaken I will express it Negatively and Positively.

Negatively,

I. *A Work of Grace on the Heart is, not a ground or warrant for the faith of Adherence.* Whether a Man hath a Work of Grace upon him or no, it is his Duty to betake himself to Christ, and draw in all his desires and hopes unto him: the command of believing taketh hold upon and binds the Conscience of graceless ones as well as of Believers, *the Gospel is to be preached to every Creature, Mar. 16. 15. to every Creature under Heaven, Col. 1. 23.* and they who hear this Gospel are commanded to believe on the name of Jesus Christ, 1 John. 3. 23. Christ is set forth in the Gospel; but how? He is set forth as the hope and refuge of those who are in danger of the Avenger of Blood, as the Apostle intimates, *Heb. 6. 18.* In short, whether you have Grace or not, you may believe, you must believe, it is your Duty, and you are bound in Conscience to believe, that is, to believe with a Faith of dependance

and reliance upon Christ for Eternal Salvation and Life. A Work of Grace therefore in the Soul is not the ground and warrant of the Faith of *Assurance*, but it is the means of the Faith of *Assurance*.

2. When I say it is the means of the Faith of Assurance I am far from meaning, and you must by no means understand it, as if a work of Grace wrought on the Heart were the *matter* of our *Justification*, or were *that for which* we are accepted of God and our Sins pardoned: Much less is a Work of Grace at all *Meritorious* thereof. No, those Saints in whom the Work of Grace is carried on to the highest Perfection are far from placing any *Merit* therein: we should abhor such a thought, that the Work of Grace doth at all *Merit* our acceptance and pardon; it hath no influence upon our good Estate *that way*. No, *that* in which we stand is wholly out of our selves, *even Christ and his Righteousness*: It is not the Work of Grace and of the Spirit of God *in us*; but it is the Righteousness of Christ *without* us, and performed *for us*: in *this* we stand accepted before God.

3. A Work of Grace on the Heart, altho' it be a means of Assurance or knowing that we are passed from Death to Life; yet *it is not the only means thereof*: but there are other things which have a joint and concurring influence to beget and maintain this Knowledge in a Believers Soul. The *Word of God* is the great bottom and Foundation of Assurance. There are likewise the enlightnings and *reflections of Conscience* which have an influence upon a Believers knowing that he is past from Death to Life. There is moreover the Work

of

of the *Holy Ghost* as a Spirit of *Consolation*, sealing a Believer up even in his own Conscience unto the day of Redemption. All these concur and contribute in their several Kinds and Ways unto a Believers Assurance. And therefore, when I say that the Work of Grace on the Heart is a means of it, I do not intend that it is the *only* means, but that it hath some influence in its own way and kind towards the attaining of Assurance.

4. This Work of Grace in a Believers Heart, which is the means of Assurance, *must not be taken nor looked upon as separate from Christ; or as separate from the Word of the Gospel which doth speak Peace.* It must not be lookt upon as separate from *Christ*: but as in Conjunction with *him*. The Assurance and Joy of a Believers Heart doth grow up not from a View of those Love-Letters or Love-Tokens which he hath received from Christ his Head and Husband in Heaven; but those Love-Letters and Love-Tokens are lookt upon as Pledges of the Souls being betrothed and espoused to *Christ*, as evidences of its *Relation to Him* and standing in *Him*. Neither is this Work of Grace, when it is a means of Assurance, to be looked on as separate from the *Word of Promise*. For tho' a Man have all the grace of a glorified Saint or blessed Angel; if there were not a Word of Promise speaking Peace to him, his Grace would give him no Peace, or Assurance. A Work of Grace therefore is a means of Assurance; how? As leading to *Christ*, as coming from *Christ*: And as in Conjunction with the *Word of Peace and Consolation* in the Gospel.

But to speak a little *Affirmatively* or *Positively*: *How is a Work of Grace a means of Assurance?* I Answer in two Words.

1. As an *Argument* and *proof* of a Mans good Estate, of his being past from Death to Life. It is *this* that is the *reason* which a Believers Conscience rendereth to himself for evidencing and making out that his *State* is good. I say, as the *Argument* and *Proof* that a Mans *State* is good. And hence two things follow.

(1.) That a work of Grace is a means of Assurance *as it is discerned and seen*, as it is *known and read* by the Believers own Conscience. A Believer cannot by a work of Grace argue, conclude, and know that he is past from Death to Life, without discerning and *knowing that work of Grace*: He must reflect upon it, and be able to discern and read *that first*. Assurance groweth up by seeing *first* that there is a work of Grace wrought in him: and by being assured of *that*, he comes to be assured that his State is changed. Hence it cometh to pass that some Believers who have a work of Grace wrought in them; yet not *seeing* it, they do not know that they are past from Death to Life: tho' they be past, yet they know it not, because they know not that work of Grace which is wrought upon them. Hence,

(2.) It followeth also, that a work of Grace on the Heart is a means of a Believers knowing he is past from Death to Life, *as a work of Grace is inseparably connected with a change of a Mans State*. It is indeed by vertue, and in the strength of this inviolable *connection* which God hath

hath made between a gracious change of the Heart, and a change of the State, that a change of Heart is a means to know the change of a Mans State. Grace then is a means of Assurance as it is a *Sign* and *Token* of a new Covenant State and it is a *Sign* and *Token* of *that*, not meerly *natural*, nor meerly *Voluntary*; but it is of a *mixt* Nature: there is conjunct therein the *Constitution of God*, and also the Nature and respect of *the thing it self*. A Believers good Estate doth consist in his interest in the Love and Favour of God in Christ: but now the Work of Grace is the Effect and Fruit of Electing and Redeeming Love; the Work of Vocation and Sanctification is inseperably connected with that Love wherewith the Lord embraceth all Believers.

2. A Work of Grace in the Heart contributes to Assurance *in a way of causal Efficiency*. It doth enable, capacitate and dispose the Soul to know that it is translated from Death to Life: In order to a Souls knowing this, there must be a knowing what God hath wrought upon him: A Work of Grace is that which enableth a Man to see and Discern this. In a Work of Grace the Man is made a *Spiritual Man*, and *the spiritual Man judgeth of and discerneth the things of God*, spiritual things; others neither do nor can know them: the Work of Grace is a spiritual Work, there is in the Work of Grace a light set up in the Mind and understanding of the Believer; by this light he is enabled to discern the Work of God's Grace upon his own Soul: So you know the Apostle telleth us, 1 Cor. 2. 14. 15. It is only the spiritual Person that can discern and

and know spiritual Things, the things of God: A graceless, unregenerate Person (especially when it concerneth himself) is apt to mistake, and to take a common work for a saving Work; but one that is regenerate, and hath a Work of Grace upon his Soul, he hath such a light set up in his Bosom as that he is enabled in some measure to see the defectiveness of all other things, how much they come short of and differ from a saving work. And besides, unto a Believers Assurance and knowing that he is past from Death to Life, there doth, there must concur an acquiescency and repose of Heart in the Testimony and Judgment of God; a Man will never know it else, he will never be settled and satisfied concerning it unless his Heart be framed to acquiesce and rest in the Judgment of God: Now it is the Work of Grace upon the Soul which fashioneth the Soul to look to, and rest in the Judgment of God declared in his Word concerning a Mans spiritual Estate. As for graceless Persons, the power of Sin in them is such, that altho' God speak plainly in his Word, and telleth them their Condition is bad, Dangerous and deadly; yet they regard it not, are not laid under prevailing Convictions of it: But on the other hand, from the work and influence of Grace upon the Heart of a regenerate Person he is inclined and ready to sit down satisfied with the Testimony of God in his Word; the Work of Grace bringeth a Believers Soul to say, *the Lord is my Judge, the Lord is my Law-giver, the Lord is my King*, it waiteth for his Word, for the Judgment, Sentence and Declaration of it's Condition, from
the

the Mouth of God, and from none else, it is a small thing for it to be judged of Man, or of Mans Judgment, but he that Judgeth him is the Lord. And this Disposition of Heart to sit down under, and be satisfied and rest in the Judgment of God, is wrought in the Heart in a Work of Grace or Regeneration.

I should next proceed to some *Reasons*, to clear up the Truth of the Doctrine: And then to the *Removal* of some *Stumbling-blocks*, which the Weakness or Darkeness of Men, and the Craft of Satan have cast into this Highway of Holiness. But I shall not enter upon these now, but improve what hath been already delivered, and shew you the *Use* of it.

APPLICATION.

If a Work of Grace be a Means of Assurance, then unto you that would get Assurance that your State is good, *this Doctrine* boldeth forth *Direction* and *Light* what you must do, what *Course* you must take. And it is a Word of very plain and sure *Direction* in this great Case and Concernment which is upon many, which should be upon all your Hearts: You would fain know that ye are pass'd from Death to Life; this Doctrine telleth you what Course you must take, it telleth you one Means you must attend unto, and use, if ever you would know *this* concerning your selves.

There are Three *Directions* contained in this Point, with reference unto *Assurance*:

First, You that would be Assured, you must get *Grace*.

Secondly,

Secondly, Having gotten Grace, *you must labour to discern it*: For it being in its Nature an Evidence of a good Estate, you must endeavour to read that Evidence.

Thirdly, Having both gotten Grace, and discerned Grace, *you must then labour to improve it for your Assurance and Consolation*. Give me leave to speak unto and prosecute each of these: I shall do it with all possible Brevity and Plainness, my Desire and Design being to lead the weakest Christians by the Hand to attain Assurance of their good Estate by a Work of Grace.

First, Get Grace. There is no Assurance without it. All Perswasions of a good Estate, while there is no Work of Grace upon the Heart, are but woful and dangerous Delusions; for they are contrary unto the Word and Testimony of God in the Scriptures. God every where in the Scriptures denounceth War and Wrath against Men in a graceless Condition, he threatneth and curseth Men while without Grace, he layeth them under Condemnation; *he that believeth not, is condemned already*, John 3. 18. and *the wrath of God abideth on him*, ver. 36. Therefore to think otherwise, to think that thy State is good while there is no Faith, no Grace in thy Heart, is an Imagination expressly contradictory unto the revealed Truth of God in his Word. Get Grace therefore, if ever you would have Peace; Tho' Grace be not *meritorious* of Peace; yet the Getting of it is the *Way* to be in a State of Peace, and to have Peace spoken to you by God. With reference unto getting Grace, in order to Assurance, I leave two Cautions with you.

1. *Renounce all Perswasions that thy State is good while thy Heart is graceless.* All such Perswasions should be abandoned and abhorred, avoided and eschewed as dangerous and Soul-destroying Things: They are, in truth, begotten between the Father of Lyes and a blind self-flattering Heart; for they are (as I said even now) contradictory to the Word of God: The Devil therefore begetteth them upon a blind and self-flattering Heart, and that not only as the *Father of Lyes*, but as the *Destroyer and Murderer of Souls*; for he understands full well what a direct Tendency such a Perswasion hath in a graceless Heart to lock him up in Senselessness, Security, and Unbelief. There is nothing that is more necessary to be avoided, than this Perswasion, that thy State is good while thou livest in thy Sin and Unregeneracy: It is one of the most dangerous things in the World to maintain Quiet and Peace in a Man's own Conscience, while in the mean time he liveth in his Lusts and Unregeneracy. You know how God thunders against it, *Deut. 29. 18, 19, 20, 21. Take heed lest there be any root that beareth gall and wormwood, any man that blesteth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, tho' I walk in the imagination of my own heart, &c.* Take heed, saith God, of such a thing of flattering your selves, that your State is good and peaceable, while your way is evil and your *Frame* is unregenerate, your *Heart and Nature* unchanged: Why, what is the Danger of it? Saith God, *I will not spare him, but my anger and jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses which are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his*

his name, &c. God setteth up that Soul as the Butt of his Indignation, more especially than others; I say, God setteth up, as the Butt of his Indignation, *that Soul* who shall say in himself, *I shall have peace, tho' I live in sin.* You read in *Job* of the *Hope* and *Trust* and *Confidence* of the *Wicked*, or of *Hypocrites*; but you read of it too, that it is as a *Spider's Web*, it is *as the giving up of the Ghost*, *Job* 8. 13, 14, 15. and 11. 20. There you have those Expressions used concerning it; these *Hopes*, these *Perswasions* that thy State is good, while thou art a wicked, graceless Creature, and but a *Hypocrite*, will be *as the giving up the Ghost*, and as a *Spider's Web*: Thy Confidence will bring thee to the King of Terrors, these *Delusions* will draw thee into the Arm of Death, and unavoidable Perplexities and Terrors, first or last.

2. Let me leave another Caution with you about getting Grace (still with respect unto it as an Evidence of a good Estate) and that is this, *Take heed of taking up with a common Work upon your Hearts, a Work that hath not Salvation accompanying it, and being deceived thereby.*

You know there are common Works of the Spirit; the Holy Ghost doth *strive with Men* who remain still Carnal and Unregenerate, *Gen.* 6.

3. There are *Counterfeits* of all the gracious saving Operations of the Holy Ghost. It is true, there is a *saving Illumination*, *Eph.* 5. 8. *ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord*; and, *2 Cor.* 4. 6. *God hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ.* But yet there are common Enlightnings too; so the Apostle tells

tells us, *Heb. 6. 4, 5.* There is indeed a *Repentance unto Life*, the Scripture beareth witness of that. But yet there is also a *common Repentance*, I mean a *counterfeit Repentance*. It is said of *Judas*, that *he repented*, *Matt. 27. 3.* There is such a *Confession of Sin* in the *Actings* of the *Grace of Repentance*, as findeth precious Acceptance with God : *He that confesseth his sin, and forsaketh it, findeth mercy*, *Prov. 28. 13.* *1 Job. 1. 9.* *David* experienced it, *Psal. 32. 5.* *I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* But yet there is a *Confession of Sin* which is but *counterfeit*, and is found in *Hypocrites*; *1 Sam. 15. 24.* ye have that great *Hypocrite, Saul*, confessing his Sin. There is a *Faith* of the *Elect of God* which hath *Salvation* accompanying it; but there is also a *common* and a *counterfeit Faith*. You read of a *Temporary Faith*, *Luke 8. 13.* *Some receive the word with Joy, and have no root, and for a while believe, and then fall away.* You read of a *Hypocrites Faith*, *Acts 8. 13.* *Simon Magus himself believed; and yet had neither part nor lot in Christ, his Heart not being right in the sight of God.* ver. 21. The like I might instance in all the other parts and passages of a *Work of special and saving Grace*, there is an imitation and counterfeit of every *Grace* found in the *Practice and Hearts of Men*. Now beware of taking up with *this* in stead of a *sound saving Work of Grace*: For if you take up with these common impressions of the *Spirit of God*, as if they were saving and special, you delude your selves and build your *Assurance* upon the *Sand*, and it will come down, and the fall thereof will be great. By this means

means there are many deceive themselves: it is the expression of the Holy Ghost concerning this matter *Jam. 1. 22. deceiving their own selves.* How do men deceive themselves? they do so by false reasonings: either the *form* of the reasoning is false and weak; or else one *proposition* in their reasoning is *untrue*; but either way they deceive themselves, Yea hence it is, that many do deceive *others* also as well as themselves: for Men cannot look into the Heart, and when they see any Work of the Spirit of God upon a Soul, and know no evidence to the contrary but it may be sound and saving, they Judge charitably and hope the best: hence it cometh to pass there are Hypocrites in *Zion*, Chaff in *Christ's Floor* as well as Wheat, yea in *Churches* wherein the Kingdom of Christ upon Earth is set up and exercised, there are *foolish Virgins with Lamps but no Oil*, *Math. 25.* take heed therefore of being deceived, especially in such a day wherein there is a great deal of Counterfeit Coin passeth up and down: take heed every one for your selves that your Souls be not deceived in taking a common work for a Work of saving and special Grace.

Secondly. *Having gotten Grace you should labour to discern and read this Evidence of your good Estate.* If you have it and do not read it, you are never the nearer as to your Assurance and comfort. Hence it is there are some that have Grace who yet walk in darkness and see no light, yea some that would fain have Assurance and yet go without it, because they do not *discern* that Work of Grace which is wrought in them. You will ask *how should that*
Work

Work of Grace be discerned that is wrought in a Soul? I will leave with you two *Rules* to that purpose.

1. *Act it frequently, vigorously, be abundant in acting of it.* The acting of Grace is the way to discern it, to make it become sensible; and to make thy Heart feel it. *Natural* affections lie deep, but in the *acting* of them they are most conspicuous and easily perceived: it is so with a *Work* and *Principle of Grace*, it becometh visible upon the reviews and reflections of a Mans own Conscience in the *Acting* of it. Fire while raked up in the Ashes cannot be discerned; but blow the Ashes off; and then it may be clearly seen: so it is with Grace in the Heart, blow it up into a Flame, set it a glowing in lively and vigorous Actings, then Conscience will declare that there is Grace in that Heart of thine. A little Sugar or sweet in the bottom of the Cup may not be tasted: but if it be stirred and shaken it may: so there may lie a little Grace in the bottom of thy Heart, but if you would taste it, have a full and satisfying Experience that there is Grace in thy Heart, thy way is to *stir up* that Grace into Exercise, act it mightily, Act it so as it may become Victorious and prevalent against Temptation and indwelling Sin. If you ask *what* Grace? I answer *any* Grace, *all* Grace: there is no Grace of the Holy Ghost; but by being acted it may be discerned, and being discerned it is a means to know that thou art past from Death to Life. But more particularly, be more abundant in acting of those Graces wherein a Soul doth pass from a State of Death to a State of Life. there are

some Transactions between a Soul and God, wherein the Soul doth, as I may say, pass from Death to Life; the moving of the Soul from a State of Death to a State of Life, is in the Actings of such Graces: For Instance, *mourning* over Sin, *reflecting* on it, *lamenting* it to God, *confessing* it before his Face; you that would be clear that there is Grace in your Hearts, should be much in *that* Practice, you should *abound* in that Practice, more especially with respect unto *some* Sins, those Sins that do amaze and astonish thy Conscience most, and which thou art afraid God is most provoked and incensed by, you should confess *those* Sins, and be abundant and frequent in confessing *them* in particular; and in all your Confessions you should load, wound, and stab your own Hearts in the Sense of the Evil of them. So likewise for *humbling* your selves before God, which is another Path wherein a Soul goeth, when he is translated from Death to Life; I say, *humbling* thy self before God, that is, taking off thy Heart from all other Hopes and Confidences, letting them go, and abandoning them, and unbottoming thee from thy self; you should be much and frequent in this: Own your own Guilt and Vileness, your own Impotency, and your Unworthiness, to be pitied and helped by God; disclaim and renounce every thing in your selves, as to any Trust or Confidence therein: In a word, thou shouldest be much in laying thy Hand upon thy Heart, thy Mouth in the Dust, thy Neck down upon the Block at God's Foot. Again, to Instance in another: A resolute *cleaving unto Christ*, choosing of him, committing thy Soul unto him; this is an acting

of Grace which the Soul, that would attain unto Assurance, should be frequent in: herein, if in any thing, doth a self-condemned Sinner lay hold upon Eternal Life. And lastly, among all the Graces which you should stir up, exercise and act, forget not this which is mentioned in the Text, *love to the Brethren*: Love is a comforting Grace, if there be any comfort of Love saith the Apostle, *Phil. 2. 1.* look as *Breaches* upon the Law of Love grieve the Spirit, as the Apostle intimates, *Eph. 4. 30. 31, 32.* so *exercises* of the Grace of Love mightily tend to bring in Peace and Comfort into the Heart; *put on Charity, and let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, Col. 3. 14, 15.* Ay, those two go together, the exercise of Charity, and the Peace of God ruling in your Hearts. Therefore exercise love to the Brethren, to Saints; cast in thy lot among them, see thy Heart close with them and delight in them: notwithstanding their infirmities, defects, deformities; yet close with them with delight and love, upon the account of their relation to Christ, and that image of his which they bear. The Apostle *John* insisteth much upon this in his Epistle, as an Evidence of being past from Death to Life.

2. The second Rule is, You must awaken Conscience to reflect and spy into your Hearts, and see all that passeth there between God and you. The Spirit of Man is the Candle of the Lord searching the inward parts of the Belly: Conscience hath an ability, especially when it is renewed enlightned, and acted by the Holy Ghost, to go down into the darkest Chambers of the Heart, and see what is there: you should

call upon your own Consciences, lay a charge on them from God to descry, and bring in a discovery of What is within you, whether there be a Work of Grace wrought in your Hearts or no; therefore set Conscience on work: And there is a *double* work incumbent upon Conscience in order to the thing before me.

(1.) *Conscience ought to discern, judge and bear Witness whether there be Grace in the Soul or no.*

Unto that end Conscience should not only be *awake*, but it should be *impartial*: it should hear all that is *against*, and all that is *for* a Man: and when it cometh to pass Judgment, it should be very critical and curious; for the Judgment and witness that Conscience is to give, is to be in the name of *God*, and as from *him*; therefore Conscience should be critical and curious: it should not go only upon Negatives, it should bring those things that have an appearance of Grace, upon the Tryal, by touch, taste, and weight, it should examine them by that account and Description which the Word of God giveth concerning true and saving Grace. On the one hand Conscience should take heed of misjudging and flattering a Man by taking that for Grace which is not so: On the other hand it should take heed of misjudging and condemning a Man, by rejecting or denying true Grace. Conscience ought not to Judge whether a Man have Grace or no by any mistaken *Rule*: and there are abundance of false, erroneous Rules which Conscience is oftentimes deceived and deluded by. As *unregenerate* Men sometimes take the working of a *reigning* Sin to be but *infirmities* which

which are found in the Children of God: So on the other hand it is not uncommon that the *Children of God* do misconceive and misjudge of themselves, by taking the working of Sin they find in their own Bosoms to argue the *Dominion* of Sin: but that is a mistaken Rule, it is not the *presence*, no nor the *acting* of Corruption that argueth a Mans gracelessness; but it is the *Dominion* of Corruption: As on the other hand, it is not the *imperfection* and defectiveness of Grace which argueth the *unsoundness* of it: you must Judge of what is good in your selves by the *kind* and *Nature* of it: and not by the *degree* and *measure* of it: to Judge of that which is good in your selves by the degree and measure of it, is contrary to the Direction of the Holy Ghost in Scripture: *Hezekiah* pleaded that he had walked before the Lord in Integrity: *Paul* had for his rejoicing, the Testimony of his Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity he had his conversation in the World, 2 Cor. 1. 12. he doth not say, in Perfection of holiness and Obedience he had his Conversation; but in simplicity and godly sincerity. I Mention it the rather, because it is the Doctrinal Error of some Writers, and the practical Error of weak Believers, to reject precious Tokens and Evidences of the Love of God, because they do not arrive to such a Degree and Measure as they would be at. A Believer's Comfort and Evidence is to be gotten by the Gospel, and not by the Law, by the Covenant of Grace and not by the Covenant of Works: The Covenant of Works rejecteth indeed, any thing that hath defilement and defectiveness cleaving to it, but the Gospel, the Covenant of Grace, speaketh

Peace when there is Sincerity and Truth, tho' there be much imperfection: Now Believers are to go for their comfort and the Evidence of their good Estate, unto the Gospel, and not unto the Law; they are to Judge and conclude concerning their Condition by the light of the Gospel and not by the rule of the Covenant of Works.

(2.) *Another Office and Duty of Conscience is to Record what it hath discerned and judged.* It should leave upon everlasting Record what it hath discovered concerning God's Grace in the Heart, and should lay up in precious Remembrance those Tokens and Evidences of the Love of God, for they really are so: Grace, any acting of Grace is really a Token of Gods Love, and therefore it should be laid up in precious Remembrance, that you may have it ready at Hand in Time of need: the Psalmist tells us there was a Day of Temptation and darkness came upon him, his Soul refused to be comforted, he was troubled, and his Spirit was overwhelmed, Psal. 77. 2. 3 but what a Course did he take in this Case? among other things, he remembered his Song in the Night, those Songs he had sometimes formerly Sung. It may be thy Heart is shut up and hardened now: but can'st not thou remember a time when it used to melt? May be thy Heart is shut up in unbelief, it is bourn down by it now; but can'st thou not remember when there were enlarged goings out of Heart to Christ, closing with him, and strong reposings of Soul upon him? A Believer that can remember, as recorded by his Conscience, such transactings between his Soul and God formerly, he may have a ground

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to conclude that his State is good ; tho' at present his Heart be much oppressed by the prevailing of Temptation, or the power of indwelling Sin.

Thirdly, Having received Grace, and discerned it, *Improve this Evidence of a good Estate, a Work of Grace wrought and read*: Improve it to your Assurance and Comfort. It is sad to observe the omission or unskilfulness of some Christians in this regard ; they have Grace, others see it, nay themselves can't deny it: and yet they can get no Assurance, can take no comfort. Improve therefore a Work of Grace unto Assurance. Four things I would leave with you about this.

1. *Bring that Work of Grace within you to the Word of God without you.* Compare and see how it agreeth therewith, see what the Word speaketh to those in whom Grace is: this is the way, the only way, and it must be done in the first Place; if you would get Assurance by a Work of Grace, you must bring that Work of Grace unto the Word of God, and see what the Word speaketh to one in whom there is such a Work wrought. The truth of it is, God in working Grace in the Soul, writeth a Mans name legibly in the promise of Salvation and Eternal Life: It was there before in the purpose of God, and in the ancient transactings between Christ and the Father: Ay, but tho' it was written in Heaven, yet it was not legible to any Creature here below till God came to work Grace in the Heart, and then he makes a Mans Name, which was written in Heaven, legible in the Promise.

2. *Labour with thine own Heart to be settled and satisfied with the Determination of God in his Word.* It is the Presumption and stout-heartedness of many carnal and unregenerate ones, that tho the Word of God speaketh Wrath and Condemnation, they never regard it, because of their stout-heartedness: It is the Sin and the strength of unbelief in some poor Believers, that tho God in his Word speak Peace and Comfort to them, yet they take it not in, but it passeth away, and slideth off like Water from a Rock. There is great reason why a Soul should be determined by the Voice and Sentence of God in his Word; for it is a *sure* Testimony, it is surer than a Voice from Heaven, and what the *Word* speaketh, *God* speaketh, what the Word speaketh, the Holy Spirit speaketh: and God will Judge every Man as to his Eternal Condition, and his Doom shall be according to the *Word*. There is a strange kind of Vanity in our Spirits, that we would decline the *Word*, and avoid *that*, and have some *immediate Revelation*, either to our selves or to some others for us. I have read of a Woman that wrote to a Minister of great name in our Day, that he would be restless with God until he had got a Revelation concerning the Pardon of her Sins and the Salvation of her Soul: The answer was good and wise, *you desire a thing, saith he, which is hard to be obtained, and besides if it were obtained it would be useless to you.* It is not a Revelation given to any private Person in a private way, that can be the bottom of thy Faith concerning thy own good Estate; and therefore do not listen to such things, but to the Word and to the

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Testimony: Let not thy Heart hanker after such a way of Assurance, but look to the Law and to the Testimony, for whatever or whosoever speak not according to Gods Word, it is because there is no light in them, Isa. 8. 20. Let the Knowledge of thy good Estate be gotten from thence, let thy faith of Assurance be from the Word.

3. This Work of Grace, to which the Word of the Gospel speaketh Peace and Comfort, remember always to look upon it as an Evidence and Pledge of thy being in Christ, of thy standing in Christ, of thy Union unto Christ. So far as a Sight of a Work of Grace in thy self turns thine Eye away from Christ, or leads off thy Heart from Christ, it proveth pernicious to thee: I say therefore, look upon it always as a Pledge of thy Union to Christ, there is no Work of Grace but it is so; it cometh from Christ, and it speaketh Union to him, it is an Evidence of thy standing in Christ: True Grace will teach us to cast down our Crowns at the Foot of Christ indeed, and to set the Crown upon the Head of Christ. We are in Danger, through the Remainders of Pride which are in us, to be proud of a Work of Grace, if we discern any thing of it in our selves: But make that Improvement of it, to turn thy Eye to Christ, to lead thy Heart to Christ, which will prevent that perverse Use thereof, and it will very much commend and help thy Assurance and Comfort. The Privileges are so high, the Things promised to Believers are so exceeding great, that sometimes right precious Faith is astonished, and staggereth, and knoweth not how to take them in,
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especially with reference to it self: How can it ever be, that I who have done such things against God, that am so guilty, polluted, and full of Wants, should be an Heir of Glory? have a Title to Heaven? This Consideration is a Relief to thee; Ay, but I am a *Member of Christ*, an Heir of *his*, I stand and am joined to God, not as in my self, but as married to the Son of God. *Believers skipping over that Fundamental Privilege of their New Covenant-State, Union to Christ, is the Bane of their Assurance, and a secret Worm at the Root of all their Comfort: For looking upon themselves as in themselves, and not as in Christ, they cannot take in that Comfort which belongeth to them.*

4. This Work of Grace which the Word speaketh Peace unto, being looked upon as an Evidence of thy being in Christ, *improve it further, to make thy Assurance and Rejoicing full. Improve it both as an Earnest of thy certain Salvation and Happiness, and also as an Evidence of God's electing and redeeming Love unto thee. Improve it as a certain Earnest and Pledge of thy future Salvation and eternal Life; it really is so, and God telleth you so, because he would have you to make that use of it. There is an inviolable Connexion between all the Links of the blessed Chain, Rom. 8. 30. Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified: If you can discern that you are called, you may, you should from thence conclude you are justified, and shall be glorified. God, in working Grace on a Soul, doth work that Soul for Glory, 2. Cor.*

§. 5. *he giveth thee Earnest of the Spirit in so doing*; and this is a Ground why a Soul should be confident of its future Salvation, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and present with the Lord, as the Apostle there speaketh.

As you should improve it as a Pledge and an Earnest of Glory, so you should likewise improve it as an Evidence of your Interest in *Electing and Redeeming Love*. By a Work of Grace, assuring thee of thy living Union to Christ, you should look back, and say, I was in the Heart of Christ when he hung upon the Tree, and my Name is engraven upon the Breastplate and Shoulders of Christ, now he is in the most Holy Place, where he manageth all the Concernments of my Soul. Yea, you should look back, and see that your Name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life from the Foundation of the World; that thou art one that was given unto Christ by God the Father in that eternal Covenant-Transaction between them both: Yea, you should rise higher than that, and look upon that Work of Grace which is an Evidence of thy Union to Christ, as an Evidence and Assurance of thy Interest in *Electing Love*; I was one that was in the Thoughts and Heart of God from all Eternity, he purposed concerning me all that he hath done for me, and all that he hath wrought on me; yea, he purposed for me Things far beyond what I am able to take in by Faith. Thus by a Work of Grace wrought upon a Soul, compared with the Word of God, and looked upon as an Evidence of *being in Christ*, a Soul may be lodged and laid in the very Bosom of Christ, and the *Electing and Redeeming-Love* of the Father there

ther and Son : And until it come to this, that thou seest thy self in Christ *now*, and seest thy self a certain Heir of *future* Glory, when thy Life here shall be at an end, yea, until thou seest that thou wert upon the Heart, and in the Love of God and Christ *from all Eternity*, thy Assurance is not full and compleat.

S E R M O N XVIII.

I J O H N III. 14.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

TH E Doctrine was, that a Work of Grace is a means of Assurance.

The Confirmation of which Truth is what I shall attend unto now : And for that end lay before you a few Considerations.

1. God in his Word declareth that Mans Estate is good in whom there is a work of Grace. Yea God so declareth this, as that he doth in his Word shut out and exclude all others, all *unconverted*, all *graceless* ones from being in a good Estate: He doth in his Word plainly declare that *their State is bad*, that it is a State of *wrath*, and they *under the Curse*. He that *believe not* is *condemned already* because he *hath not believed*

believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God, Joh. 3. 18. Thus speaketh God in his Word. And all that the Word speaketh concerning Mens Estate is either in the Law, or in the Gospel: The Law layeth all Men under the Curse, Gal. 3. 10. as many as are of the Works of the Law are under the Curse; for it is written cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them. So that the Law doth denounce concerning every Man who is under it, that his Estate is woful and wretched. And for the Gospel, that speaketh no good concerning a Mans Estate unless there be a Work of Grace wrought in him, as you heard but now, he that believeth is not condemned: but (as it there follows) he that believeth not is condemned already: the Gospel therefore declareth unbelievers, graceless and unregenerate ones, who have no work of Heart-changing Grace wrought on them, to be in a State of wrath: For there are none to whom even the Gospel speaks good, touching their State, but only those that have Grace wrought in them: when it speaketh Peace, it describeth and deciphereth the Persons whom it meaneth, who are intended and concerned in that Peace it speaketh, by some Work of Grace.

You will object and say, it may be, how can this be so; are there not absolute promises in the Gospel as well as conditional, absolute Declarations of love and favour from God as well as conditional?

To clear this as I pass: Those Terms absolute and conditional are Terms borrowed from the Law, and are used to expresse the different or logical

logical disposal of the parts of a proposition: there hath been much dust raised about them; but there is a Sense wherein the Terms may be used and allowed, that there are *conditional* promises, and *absolute* promises: tho there is a sense wherein there are none that are absolute or conditional. Take *conditional* as implying an *irresolution* in the mind of God, and an undeterminedness in himself, in his own purpose, whether the good spoken of in the promise shall ever be communicated to any Man, *i. e.* this or that Man in particular (and in this sense some seem to use that word) and so there are no *conditional* promises: For there are no expressions which do either express or signify that God is *unresolved* and *undetermined* in his own mind and purpose whether he will Communicate the good promised unto any Man, unto *this* or *that* Man in particular. And on the other hand take, *absolute* as implying and signifying that there is no *Duty* bound on us, there is no *Grace* required in us, in order to our being made partakers of the good of such a promise; and taking it in *this* sense there is no absolute Promise in all the Book of God from one end to the other: For there is no Promise of any blessing, but it doth either presuppose some *Work of Grace* wrought in us, or at least it obligeth unto some *duty* which is incumbent on us: yea, and *that* as the *way* and *means* whereby we may come to be made partakers of the good that is promised. The Terms therefore of *absolute* and *conditional*, being of such an uncertain signification I would wave or decline the using of those expressions: Let us call the Promises *Indefinite*, and *Definite*. Indefinite, such as only declare that

that God will do such or such a thing; without telling us for whom he will do it: And *Definite Promises*, such as do describe, Characterise and set forth the Person that hath a Title to and interest in the good things Promised. Now it is true, there are *Indefinite Promises* in the Scripture, that is, Promises which do not express who the Persons are for whom the thing promised shall be done: but it is as true, that those Indefinite Promises can never be the means of Assurance, it is impossible they should. And the reason is very plain and obvious, Assurance is the Knowledge of a Mans good Estate, it is the Judgment of a Mans own Conscience that he hath an interest in such a blessing, and that by such a Promise: Now an Indefinite Promise can't be a means of Assurance, because the Indefinite Promise telleth not, declareth not who the Person is that is meant and intended in it: It giveth no Description of him, by which he can be known either by himself or by any other Man or Angel. If there be either expressed or implied in a Word of Promise any Description of the Person to whom the mercy belongeth or to whom it shall be performed, it is no longer an Indefinite Promise; but becomes a definite Promise; because there is a Character given in it of the Person to whom it doth belong. That is one Consideration for evincing the Doctrine, that the Word of God speaketh Peace, and telleth Men their Estates are good: but it only telleth them so in whom there is a Work of Grace wrought.

2. The Word of God doth direct us to get Assurance in this way, directeth us to take this Course to get a Knowledge that our State is good. 2 Cor.

13. 5. *Examine your selves, prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you:* By knowing our selves we may know whether Christ be in us: There are *Signs and Tokens* of Christ's being in us, there are such Tokens in our selves as are witnesses from Heaven thereof if he be in us indeed: *By this we know that we are in him,* 1 Joh. 2. 3. 5. *by this, by what?* By a Work of Grace appearing in our Evangelical and Holy walking, *by our keeping his Commandments, by our keeping his Word.* So you will find throughout the Scripture, that the Holy Ghost there doth direct us to search after a *Work of Grace*, and find out *that*, and that in order unto *this end*, to know that our Estate is good. The Saints of God that have gotten Assurance, and walked in the light of Gods Countenance, have got it this way, taken this Course for the attaining of it: *This is our rejoicing* saith the Apostle, 2 Cor. 1. 12. *even the Testimony of our Conscience that in simplicity and Godly Sincerity by the Grace of God we have had our Conversation in the World.* A Work of Grace appearing in the uprightness of his walking was that which was the means of the Peace and Rejoicing of his Conscience. *There is no Peace to the Wicked,* Isa. 57. 21. *but the upright Man, his end is Peace,* Peace doth belonging to him, *Psal. 37. 37.* There is no instance of any Child of God who attained to know that he is past from Death to Life, but it was in *this way*: nor is there any Direction in the Scripture unto us, to look and labour for it without *this*, out of *this way* of having and discerning a Work of Heart-changing Grace wrought upon our Hearts.

3. *The Holy Ghost in or by the Consciences of Men doth bear witness unto their good Estate, if there be a Work of Grace wrought in them; and unto their bad and Cursed Estate if they be without it:* Now the Work of the Holy Ghost in Mens Consciences is not contrary, but according to the Truth of God in his Word. You read *Rom. 8. 15. ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but the Spirit of Adoption whereby we cry Abba Father.* Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear: The Spirit then is a Spirit of Bondage sometimes; and that even in the Elect of God. Now what is this Spirit of Bondage? it is nothing else but when the Holy Ghost in a Man's Conscience doth witness, and that according to the Word of God, that he standeth bound over unto Eternal wrath according to the Judgment and Sentence of God in his Word: when the Holy Ghost in a Man's Bosom saith *this*, when he maketh this impression upon the Conscience, that a Man stands bound over unto Eternal wrath according to the Judgment of God in his Word; this is the Spirit of Bondage: Now such a Spirit is the Holy Ghost, even in the Elect of God while they are in their unregenerate and Christless Condition while out of Christ. But when there is a Work of Grace wrought in them, when there is Faith and Regeneration, the Holy Ghost is then a Spirit of Adoption; he filleth their Hearts with sweet perswasions of the Love and Grace of God, and they go to him and cry *Abba Father*: He is never a Spirit of Bondage where there is a Work of Grace wrought; and he is never a Spirit of Adoption where there is no Grace.

4. *Either by a Work of Heart-changing Grace a Soul may know that his Estate is good : Or else he may know it without it : Or not know it at all.* But it is impossible that a Soul should know his Estate is good where there is no Grace wrought, Because that which is not can't be known. And the State is not good where there is no Grace : For that State can't be good to which God in his Word denounceth wrath, that State can't be good in which a Man is under the Curse. But that Soul is under the Curse and wrath of God which hath no Grace wrought in him : It cannot be known therefore that his State is good because indeed it is not so. And yet one whose State is good, may know it; he could not have Comfort else : But Comfort is attainable, and Assurance may be had. Therefore it must be had in this Scripture-way of having and discerning a Work of Grace.

5. *If a Work of Grace be not a means of Assurance, it must either be because that Work of Grace cannot be known and discerned ; or because it may be separated from a good Estate.* But a Work of Heart-changing Grace may be known and discerned : Conscience hath an ability to see and read what is done in the Heart, what is wrought there : *The Spirit of a Man is the Candle of the Lord, searching all the inward Parts of the Belly :* As Conscience can discern the working of Corruption and Sin dwelling in the Heart; so Conscience can in like manner discern the workings of Grace and of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the Soul. Besides, a Work of Grace may be discerned, because of the great Change which it maketh in the Soul, from unregenerate to regenerate : *Light and Darknes,*
Death

Death and Life do so vastly differ, and are things of so distant a Nature, that where they are in any Soul they may be discerned. A Work of Grace maketh it self *discerued*, because it bringeth in *Life*, a Principle of Light and Life, and that Principle of Light and Life is a Principle of spiritual *quickness* and *tenderness*: the Soul is more apprehensive and more deeply touched with these things than it was before. If a *graceless* Person may know that he is *without* Grace, One that *hath* Grace may much more know he hath it: For the one is *blind*, and the other hath *light*, is made *light in the Lord*, Eph. 5. 8. The one is forsaken often times by the Holy Ghost as to any gracious dealing with him; but the other hath the Holy Ghost *abiding* and *dwelling with him*: But now one that is *graceless* may know he hath no Grace, Mat. 25. the *foolish Virgins that had Lamps and no Oil*, were at last brought under this Conviction, and that extorted the Confession of it from them, *our Lamps are gone out*.

Neither can a *Work* of Grace be *separated* from a *State* of Grace: God hath made an inviolable and *Eternal Connexion* between these, the change of a Mans *Covenant* and the change of his *Image* always go together; the change of his *State* and the change of his *Frame* cannot be separated: indeed they so depend one upon the other as *Causes* and *Effects*, as that they can never be parted. As when the *first Adam* brake his *Covenant* under which he was, presently all things were turned upside-down as to the *Frame* of his *Heart*, *Guilt* was upon his *Conscience*, *depravedness* in his *Nature*;

and so it is with all his Posterity, we are first looked upon as guilty and breakers of *Adams* Covenant, the Covenant of Works, and by Vertue of that guilt and Gods Curse, cometh in depravedness and Corruption also: So it is with the Children of the *second Adam*; when once we are brought under the Covenant of Grace, and stand under *that*, when once we are *brought into the bond of it*, as the Prophet's expression is, there doth immediately and invincibly follow a change of the Frame of our Hearts. A change of Covenant and a change of Image, a change of State and a change of Heart always go together: And if so, then it follows that a Man may know his good *State*, by a good *Work* on his Heart.

6. *It may be made out by an Induction of Instances.* If Repentance and Humiliation, if Faith, if Sanctification, if new Obedience be Evidences and means of knowing that a Mans State is good; then a Work of Heart-changing Grace is a means of knowing it: But Repentance, Humiliation, Faith, Sanctification are Evidences and means of knowing that a Mans Estate God-ward is good; For God in his Word every where declareth that *that* Mans State is good who hath *these* things, who hath *any* of these things in him. *The Lord dwelleth with the contrite and with the humble*, Isa. 57. 15. and you know there are innumerable Promises to Repentance; by Repentance is meant not such a one as *Judas's* was, but *Repentance unto Life*; as the Apostle's Expression is concerning the Gentiles that repented, *Act. 11. 18.* which is peculiar and proper to the Elect and saved Ones of God; Repentance which hath

hath always Faith going along with it. The Work of *Vocation* is sometimes more discernable unto a Mans own Reflections with respect unto his *abandoning of Sin*, and his Hearts abhorring of Sin; and sometimes it is more Evident and clear as to a Mans *closing with Christ* and coming to him: but these always go together, where *one* of them is in Truth, the *other* is also. Now the Word of God doth declare that those Mens State is good in whom there is such Repentance, such Humiliation, such Faith as hath been spoken of. The like I might say concerning Sanctification, both in the *principle* of it, and in the *appearance* and expressions of it in *new Obedience*.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. *Be settled in this Truth and Principle, that there is no Peace without Grace; no Assurance without Regeneration.* There are Temptations round about you to draw you off: but take heed of being carried away with them, and entertaining any other thoughts. It is not only an *error*, but it is a *Dangerous*, a *Mischievous Error*, to think there is any Peace to be had where there is no Grace. It is an unspeakable Mercy to have a Mans Conscience enlightned and fixed in *this*, that where there is no Grace there the Estate is wretched and deplorable: for by this means a Mans Heart can never be at rest in a State of Sin, and unregeneracy; by this means Delusions and golden Dreams are prevented; by this means that security which otherwise the Heart under a Temptation would ly down in, and settle

upon, is prevented. The Heart is in danger to be hardened in a State of Sin; and this is a great Engine to harden it, when you do not attend to this as an Eternal Truth, that *where there is no Grace there can be no Peace*: Take it in therefore as a Principle, let it influence your Hearts in all your thoughts, and the Judgment of your Conscience concerning your selves; Judge, conclude and pass Sentence concerning your selves and your own Estate, according to your discerning Grace to be in your Heart or not: That is the only *sure*, the only *safe* way of judging concerning your selves.

2. This Doctrine speaketh *Confutation of that Peace and those persuasions of a good Estate, which any Soul hath that hath not Grace*: Nay it speaketh indeed *Conviction and Terror* to those that have no Grace. Hast thou a thought within thee, a witness within thee as thou thinkest, that thy *State* is good; and yet no witness within thee that there is a Work of *Heart-changing Grace* wrought upon thee? that witness is a delusion from the Father of Lies, and ought to be rejected and abhor'd by thee, as much as a Temptation to any the greatest evil whatsoever. What the Apostle speaketh of the Gospel with reference unto Justification by Faith and not by Works I may say here; *If we or any Man, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel, any other Doctrine, let him be accursed* Gal. 1. 8. let the suggestion be whence it will, that thy *State* is good, while in the mean time thy *Heart* is *naught* and without Grace, let him be accursed that suggesteth such a deluding persuasion: that *Peace* is not the

the *Peace of God*, but it is a Peace from Hell, which is maintained in the Conscience without a Work of Grace in the Heart, and without *seeing* it: and yet how many among us are there that perish and maintain such a Peace in their Hearts? If we should pass from Person to Person throughout the Congregation, where is there one but would presently say, I hope my State is good? Men are loath to entertain thoughts of the contrary: But if the demand be put, *is there Grace in thy Heart*, what *reason* canst thou give of the hope that is in thee, what *evidence*, what Assurance of a Work of Grace wrought upon thee? It is to be feared many would be at a sad loss therein, they can say little as to a Work of Heart-changing Grace, and yet hope and flatter themselves much concerning a good Estate to the last: But the Estate of such Souls is sad woful and deplorable; it is more deplorable in some regard, than theirs who live and die in Sin, under which their Consciences do cry, ake, and bleed continually; for these have no Peace, and so are not in danger of *Security* and *Delusion*: whereas those that *have a name to live*, make a profession, have flattered themselves into a Conceit that their State is good; and yet can give no account, can render *no reason* of those their persuasions, if they go on in such a delusion. *it will be less tolerable for them in the day of Judgment* than for others: they are under a malady which is incident unto *Hypocrites*, unto Professors, and Church Members who live under the most lively and searching Ministry. *Rev. 3. 14, 15, 16, 17.* you read of the Church of *Laodicea*,

Christ layeth it to their charge that they said, that is, they *thought or perswaded themselves* that they were *rich and increased with goods*, and *had need of nothing*, their State was good; but saith Christ, *who is the true and faithful witness* and a better discerner and Judge of their State, *thou art wretched, and miserable, and Poor, and Blind and naked*: They thought their State good, whereas it was woful and wretched. In a word then, Reject that delusion, be afraid of that Poyson, and of that false hope in your selves, concerning the goodness of your State, which is not brought in by discerning a work of Heart-changing Grace wrought on your Souls: For if Grace be not in thy Heart, thy State cannot be good. and thy false peace is an affront to God, it maketh him in his Word a Lier; it is not only a delusion and deceiving thy self, and a hardning thy own Heart, but it is an affront and Provocation to God, *Deut. 29. 18, 19, 20, 21. Take heed lest there be in any of you a root bearing Gall and Wormwood, that a Man should bless himself in his Heart saying I shall have Peace, tho I walk in the Imagination of mine Heart, &c.* So take heed lest you should say my State is good tho my walk and Frame be naught, tho my Heart be graceless: *the Lord will not spare such an one, but his Anger and Jealousie shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses written in this booke shall lie upon him.* There are none under Heaven more abhorred of God, against whom the Lord is more incenced, than against Professors that flatter themselves into a good Opinion of their State, and yet have no Grace in their Hearts, no Heart-changing Grace wrought

wrought upon them: Assure your selves that you may carry a fair Face before Men, and bear it out a while, yet the Hand of an all-seeing and Jealous God will first or last find you out, and then you will see how provoking it was to affront God and contradict him in his Judgment of you and your Estate.

S E R M O N XIX.

I J O H N III. 14.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

THE Point observed from the Words was this. *That a Work of Heart-changing Grace is a means whereby a Believer may know that he is past from Death to Life. In short, A Work of Grace is a means of Assurance.*

You have heard *What is meant by a Believers good Estate, or his passing from Death to Life. What is meant by a Work of Heart-changing Grace. What kind of Knowledge it is which a Believer may have of his State of Grace by such a Work of Grace upon his own Soul. And How that Work is a means of Assurance. The Do-*

Doctrine hath been confirmed by several Reasons. Application hath been made of it. The last piece of my Work upon this Subject which is now before me is, I confess unpleasing to me, namely, To give answer to those things which are Objected against this Truth of God. But I hope it may not be unprofitable unto you; and therefore it shall not be grievous to me: and as I hope it may be profitable, so I fear it is needful.

The Allegations against this, that *Grace is the means of Assurance* are so plausible and specious, as that spiritual and gracious Hearts are very apt to be taken with them: Yea, the more in danger to be taken with them because they seem to carry this design, to give to Christ and the Blood of Christ and free Grace, all the Glory both of our Salvation and Consolation. There are five or six things that are usually alledged against Grace being a means of Assurance.

First, It is pleaded, that there are Absolute Promises which speak nothing of a Work of Grace in the Heart, and these may be a means of Assurance concerning a Mans good Estate: So Assurance may be had without this Work of Grace in the Heart.

Answer, Those names of Absolute and Conditional Promises are unfitly used in this Case. There is a sense in which it is true that there is no Absolute Promise in the Book of God; namely, if you take Absolute Promises for those which are so wholly irrespective as neither presupposing any Work of Grace wrought in us, nor inferring it, nor binding any Duty on us: Thus there is no Promise that is Absolute,
Ezek.

Ezek. 36. 25, 26, 27. you have the Covenant of Grace laid before you: and it runs there, and is laid down in as *absolute* a Forme as any where in the Book of God: but yet those very Promises of the Covenant of Grace bind a Duty on us, as God himself tells us *ver. 37. I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.* So that there is no promise *Absolute* in that Sense.

Again, there is a Sense in which there is no *Conditional* Promise. As *Conditional* importeth an irresolution or undeterminedness in the Heart of God whether he will bestow the good of the Promise upon any, or at least an unresolvedness as to the *Person* in particular on whom he will bestow it: In this sense, as if Gods mind were suspended upon any thing to be done by Men, and he unresolved in himself about it, so there is no *Conditional* Promise in all the Book of God. The *Terms* therefore are inconvenient because liable to such an evil sense. These Promises which are commonly called *Absolute*, it were fitter to call them *Indefinite*: And those which are called *Conditional*, to call them *definite*: and that in *this* sense, that *Indefinite* Promises carry in them no *Description* of the Persons to whom they do belong, by which they may be known either to themselves or others. And *definite* promises are such as do *Describe* those who have an intrest in the good of those Promises, and that in such a way as may be known either to others or themselves.

This being the Case, I Answer plainly to the *Objection*; That the *Knowledge of a Mans good Estate can never be obtained by an absolute Promise.* An absolute Promise is a Promise that containeth no *Description* of the Person to whom

whom it belongeth : in *that* sence I take it, when I say no Man can know his good Estate by it. And it is plain in the nature of the thing; because if you suppose any such *Character* of the Person to whom the Promise belongs, it is no longer considered as an *Indefinite* Promise but is turned into a *Definite* one. And if you conceive it as a Promise that doth not give any description characterizing the Persons to whom it pertaineth, then there is no Man hath a ground for such a Judgment of Conscience that it belongs to *him* more than to another: and if there be no ground for a Man to Judge such a Promise belongeth to himself, it cannot be the means of his knowing his good Estate.

The Truth is, many of those Promises that are commonly called and counted *Absolute* or *indefinite* are not so; but do carry in them some description of the Persons to whom they appertain, either *in latere*, or *in litera*: as the *Jewish Rabbins* speak: there is some intimation or other in or about the promise, either in the very promise it self, or the Context, which shews who it belongs to. You have a Promise, a precious one, a free and absolute one as any in the Book of God, *Isa. 43. 25. I even I am he that blotteth out thy Transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy Sins*: But look into the Context and you will see to whom this Promise is made *ver. 21. this People have I formed for my self, they shall shew forth my Praise*: Those are the People to whom God speaketh, and whom he tells that he blots out their Sins; it is such in whom there is a Work of Heart-changing Grace. Look into, *Isa. 44.*

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 21. and you will find it is *Jeshurun*, *Israel* the *Servants* of God to whom that Promise is made, *ver. 22.* that God would blot out as a thick Cloud their *Transgressions*, and as a Cloud their *Sins*. The like I might shew concerning any other of those Promises which seem to run *absolutely*: but we take them too short when we shut out all *Descriptions* of the Persons to whom they belong.

Yea, give me leave to add, and it is that which, if you rightly apprehend, you will take in.

That there are no Promises concerning our *spiritual good Estate*, no Declarations of it in the Book of God that are *Absolute*; none but such as in the true intendment and meaning of them, and in our taken of them up ought to be look't upon as *describing and particularising* the Persons to whom they pertain. Our good Estate lyeth in our *Vital Actual Union to Christ*, which is the first and fundamental thing in it: and then there are *relative Priviledges* of Communion with Christ which flow from and follow on that Union, to wit, *Justification*, *Adoption*, and the like; and these make up our *spiritual Estate*: Now there is no declaration in the Word of God of actual Union to Christ, or of *Justification* or *Adoption* as belonging to any Person save only as he is *in Christ*; all Promises of this kind are made to us as the seed of Christ: For as he himself is the Head-promise, so he is the head of all the Promises: no Man is justified but as in Christ, no Man is a Child of God but as in Christ, no Man stands related to Christ by a *living saving Union* but as a Believer. Its true there is a *legal Union* to
Christ

Christ by an antient Covenant between the Father and the Son that is from everlasting: But a Believers *good Estate* doth not lye in that Union from Eternity; because his Estate is an Estate of wrath notwithstanding *that*: There is therefore *another being in Christ*; and *therein* it is that the State of an Elect Person is changed. *Rom. 16. 7.* the Apostle speaks of *Some* of whom he saith *they were in Christ before him*: he meaneth it of a *living Union* to Christ he can't mean it of *that being in Christ* which was from everlasting in the Covenant of Redemption; for so there is no Believer in Christ one before another, but all together at once: He meaneth it therefore of a *living Union* to Christ, that Union in wick a Believer *passeth from Death to Life*, as it is in the Text. Now I say there is no Promise, no Declaration of a Mans good Estate made in the Word of God, but with an Eye unto his *being in Christ*, as he is in Christ by this *vital Union*: And no Man is in Christ by this vital Union, until Christ apprehendeth him, and causeth him again to lay hold on Christ by *Faith*; for it is by *faith* that we come to be *in him*, that we are ingrafted into Christ, and so come to enjoy this *vital saving Union* to him. Now our ingrafting into Christ is done by a Work of Heart-changing Grace; at least it hath always inseperable from it a Work of Heart-changing Grace: If you ask how any Man is ingrafted into Christ? The answer from the *Scripture* must be, He is cut off from the *old Adam*, and drawn to *Christ*, made to close with him: he is *convinced of Sin*, and of *Righteousness*; convinced out of his Natural Estate, and convinced *into Christ*: there is a Work of Heart-changing Grace upon

upon him, and by *that* Work is this brought about, that his State is changed. Now it is as we are *in Christ* that all the Promises of a good *Estate* are made unto us, they respect us and fall upon us as in Christ. And this is plain, because look upon any Man under Heaven as *out of Christ*, and the Word speaketh no Peace to him, the Word declareth nothing of him that his *Estate* is good: No, the Word saith concerning every Man *out of Christ*, that he is a *Child of wrath*, an Heir of Hell, that he is actually *under Condemnation*; for to be free from Condemnation is confined and limited to those that are *in Christ*, Rom. 8. 1.

I well know and acknowledge the *First Grace* is promised in the New Covenant: but as for those Promises of *First Grace*; besides that they do infer a Duty incumbent on us, *Assurance* of our good *Estate* cannot be gotten by them: For they suppose and imply that Mans *Estate* not to be yet good to whom they are not fulfilled already. And moreover no Man can be *assured* by any Promise of *First Grace*, that he *shall* have it, before he have it: There is only one or two instances of the contrary, viz. that concerning Jacob, Gen. 25. 23. with Rom. 9. 12, 13. and perhaps that to Abraham concerning Isaac, Gen. 17. 19. and that to David concerning Solomon, 2 Sam. 7. 14. 15. and that concerning John the Baptist, Luk. 1. 15. But these were singular and extraordinary. And again, The Promises of *First Grace* do not speak of our *Estate*; but of *Grace* to be wrought in us, by which our *Estate* comes to be changed. The *First* Heart-changing Grace is both promised and given *freely* without respect to

to any thing *in us* antecedent to it : yet Christ's Satisfaction and Purchase, and our being in *Him* as our *Surety* may be called the *Condition* on which it is given. But that word *Condition* is of so various and uncertain a Sense, that till its Signification be agreed on and fixed, it cannot be used with any advantage either to the Truth or Edification.

Nevertheless let me add this, That *Absolute Promises* (I use the Term because it is in common use) tho they cannot be the means of *Assurance*, or a Believers *knowing his good Estate*, they are notwithstanding of manifold, excellent, and precious use both to Believers, and to unbelievers. To *Believers*; they may increase and strengthen their Faith. To *Unbelievers*; they are suited and fitted to support them, and prevent dispondency, yea they are held out for a Person who is over-whelmed with guilt and anguish to cast Anchor upon: they are excellent ground for a Soul that is in the dark to cast Anchor upon; because in them are held forth the *Riches and freeness*, and *Sovereignty* of Gods Grace. And therefore I say they are suited to be a means of the faith of *Adherence*: but, taking them in that sense which I have given, as *not describing* the Person to whom they belong, they cannot be the means of *Assurance*.

Secondly, It is alledged further, to direct *Believers* to a *Work of Grace in their own Hearts* as the means of *Assurance*, is to lead them away from the blood of Christ, and *Justification by free Grace*: it is to teach them to fetch their Comforts from something in themselves and from the Works of the Law. And thence such as hold forth this

Truth,

Truth, that *Grace is a means of Assurance* have those reproachful names cast upon them of *Duty-mongers, Legalists, and the like.*

To take away the Objection quite, I would suggest a few things. I need say the less of it, because if you call to mind what was said upon the Doctrine, and how the plain Truth was then stated, all these Objections will be obviated: But that which I would say, for Answer to it briefly, is in these four things.

1. *A work of Grace is not the ground or warrant of faith.* It is not *that* which makes it lawful, or a duty for a Soul to trust himself with Christ, and go unto him for Salvation and Life. No, Grace or no Grace, believe in Christ you must. Much less is a Work of Grace that which is the *matter or ground of the acceptation of our Persons with God.* No, that is wholly without us, that is out of our selves in the mediation of Christ, the Satisfaction he hath made, the Righteousness he hath wrought: it is to *that*, and only *that* we must look for Pardon of Sin and acceptance of our Persons. And therefore I grant, it would be a great mistake and evil in any Man to lead Souls away from the blood of Christ, or from the free Grace of God accepting pardoning and justifying of them: But the Question is whether *this* be a leading of them away from the blood and free Grace of Christ, to tell them that *by a Work of Grace in their own Soule they may come to know that they are justified, and are past from Death to Life.* And methinks it is evident that this is no leading of them away from the free Grace of God, and from the blood of Jesus Christ: but

it is a directing of them how they may, according to God, come to know their Interest in that free Grace, and in the Fruit and Benefit of that Blood.

2. *The Graces of the Spirit of God in the Heart of a Believer, and gracious Impressions made there, and the Actings and Exercise of Grace within, and appearing in the Life and Walk, are very unfitly called Works of the Law.* Works of the Law are Works done according to the Law, to satisfy it as it is a Covenant of Works: Now these Graces and gracious Impressions, and gracious Actings by a Believer, are by Virtue of the Covenant of Grace; they are the Fruits and Effects of the Spirit of Grace in the Heart, they come from Christ, as Christ is the Head of Life and Influence: and therefore they are very unfitly called Works of the Law. But,

3. If by Works of the Law be meant *such good things either done by a Believer in conformity to the Law, or wrought in a Believer by the Law, as it is an Instrument in the Hand of the Spirit of Christ*; it is then too gross a mistake, and an untruth, to say, *A Believer may take no Comfort in such Works of the Law.* The Spirit of Christ when he comes to work upon the Soul, makes use of the Law, *By the Law is the Knowledge of Sin, Rom. 3. 20. and chap. 7. 7. I through the Law am dead to the Law, saith the Apostle, Gal. 2. 19.* The Law was the Instrument and means used in the Hand of the Spirit of Christ to make the Apostle Dead to the Law: but tho the Law was the Instrument of it, yet the *Virtue and Efficacy* came from Christ, from the Death of Christ, as the same Apostle tells

tells us, *Rom. 7. 4. ye are become Dead to the Law by the Body of Christ.* So likewise as to the gracious Impressions and affings that are conformable to the Law as the Law, is a Rule of Life, the Holy Spirit of Christ makes use of the Law for the effecting of these in the Soul of an Elect Person. Love to God is required by the Law of God; it is the Sum of the first Table, that we should Love him with all our Might, Mind, Strength, and Soul. Yea, the Holy Ghost himself makes use of the Law, to mould the Heart into conformity to the Law: He indeed writeth the Law upon the Heart himself, and is the great Efficient of it; but that Manifestation of the Mind of God by the Law of God, is the means by which God doth melt down the Heart of a Believer into a conformity unto the Law: he delivers the Law to him, as I may say, and he doth thereby deliver the Heart into the mould of the Law. So that gracious Impressions made upon the Soul by the Law of God as the Instrument, and in conformity unto the Law of God as the Rule, are unftly called Works of the Law. Yea, a Christian may discern, and may, and should take Comfort in these: That is, he may and should gather and conclude that he is past from Death to Life, because such things are wrought in him.

Love to the Brethren is a Work of the Law, a Grace required by the Law, and it is that which God works in the Heart by the Law as the Instrument of it in the Hand of the Spirit: But yet Love to the Brethren was a means by which John and the Believers of his time knew they were past from Death to Life.

4. *The Comfort of a Believer doth not lie only in Justification; but it lieth also in his Renovation and Sanctification by the Spirit of Christ.* What is it that troubles a Believer? It is not only the *Guilt* of Sin, but it is also the *Power* of Sin: So that which relieveth a Believer, is not only the abolishing the *Guilt* of Sin in Justification; but it is the subduing and removing the *Power* of Sin by the gracious Renovation and Sanctification of his Nature. The blood of Christ applied unto us, doth two things for us: It obtains the Pardon of Sin, brings us into a State of Justification, and in the Virtue of that blood we stand accepted with God, it is everlastingly the blood of Attonement: But that is not all; this blood doth also mortifie our Lusts, it doth also procure quickning Grace and Influence from Christ upon us; it is in the Virtue and Cry of that blood that these things are communicated. And therefore for any Soul to Rejoice in his Justification, and to overlook his Sanctification and Renovation; the least that can be said of it is this, he takes up with *half* his Portion, he takes up with *half* those Benefits which the blood of Christ hath procured.

Thirdly, It is alledged, That a Work of Heart-changing Grace is oftentimes very low, obscure and dim, there is very little difference between the highest attainments of Hypocrites, and the lowest degree and measure of Grace in them that are Sincere; nay, some stick not to say, there is but a gradual difference: and if there be so little difference, Assurance this way must needs become very difficult and next to an impossibility. For Answer, Three things.

1. The

1. *The difference is not so little between True and Counterfeit Grace as this Objection would make it.*

'Tis not meerly gradual, but it is in kind and nature: The highest attainment of an Hypocrite, and the lowest degree of true Grace, differ more than in degree, they differ even in kind and nature. *Light and Darknes, Life, and Death, Heaven and Hell, differ more than in degree: Now so the Scripture sets out unto us the difference between true and counterfeit Grace.*

2. *The truth of Grace may be discerned; and there is no Believer but he may come to discern the truth of Grace in his own Soul, if he have it. And there are three things which concur and contribute unto the discerning of Grace in a Mans own Soul.*

(1.) *The Description that is given of it in the Word of God. And this there is no Believer but he may take in, and have an understanding of.*

(2.) *There is the Reflecting Power of a Mans own Conscience. And there is no Believer but he hath this Candle of the Lord within him; and being regenerate, that Candle is lighted up, as I may say; there is a new and spiritual light put into the Conscience, whereby he is better enabled to discern what God hath been working in him.*

(3.) *There is the Aid and Assistance of the Holy Spirit, as he is the Spirit of Comfort and Assurance. Now by these three concurring, there is no Believer but he may come to a Knowledge, a certain, infallible, and satisfying Knowledge, that there is a Work of saving Grace wrought upon his own Soul.*

3. *We find it was a common attainment a-*

mong Believers both in the Old and New Testament. How often doth David aver it? *Psal.* 119. he speaks it again and again, and *Psal.* 26. 1. he avoweth it before God himself, that he had believed or trusted in the Lord, and that he had walked in his integrity. *Job* insists upon it, he would not let his integrity be removed from him, *Chap.* 23. 11. and 27. 5, 6. and he is very large and copious in declaring and making of it out, not only to the Satisfaction of his own Conscience, but to the Conviction and silencing his Friends who charged him with being a Hypocrite. *Peter* discerned and knew the Grace of God in his own Soul, when he could say to Christ, *Yea, Lord, I love thee; yea, Lord, I love thee; Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* *Paul* discerned the Truth and Sincerity of his own Grace, when he had for his rejoicing, the Testimony of his Conscience, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, by the Grace of God, he had his Conversation in the World, *2 Cor.* 1. 12. And I might shew you as to every particular Part and Passage of the Work of Grace, the Saints of God have known it, to the Satisfaction of their Hearts they have known it by themselves. It is therefore a mistake, that there is such a cloud of obscurity upon the Grace in a Believers heart, as that it is impossible for him to come to a Satisfactory Knowledge that there is Grace there.

Fourthly, It is objected, That Grace is unconstant: If a Believer be sent for Assurance unto his own Heart and the Frame thereof, his Grace is sometimes up, sometimes down, and therefore so must his Assurance and Comfort unavoidably be. To remove this Prejudice out of the way I will suggest a few things.

1. Whereas this is alledged to draw Men off from looking after a Work of Grace in their own Hearts, as a means of Assurance, and to perswade them to look for an immediate Testimony and Revelation of their good Estate by the Spirit of God as a Comforter; I would ask, *Is that Work of the Spirit as a Comforter constant? Doth it always abide and continue? Hath not that it's up-and-downs? Hath not the Spirit, as a Spirit of Comfort, his accesses, and recesses even unto the Souls of Believers?* Now if this be a just prejudice against Assurance by any Work of Grace, because Grace is *variable*, especially as to its *actings* and *measure*; why is it not so much more against looking for Assurance in that way of an *immediate Witness*, because that witness is *variable*, sometimes vouchsafed, and sometimes withdrawn, even according to the Judgment of those who send Christians only to *that* for Assurance?

2. *It is not the degree and measure, but it is the Truth and Sincerity of Grace that is the means of Assurance.* Its true, the more Grace, commonly the more Comfort; for the more Grace is *acted*, the more clearly ordinarily it is *discerned*: but yet it is as true, that a Knowledge that we are past from Death to Life, is by seeing the *Truth and Sincerity* of Grace.

3. *The Sincerity of Grace is not variable.* Where there is once a Seed of true Grace, that Seed *remaineth* and *abideth* for ever, 1 Joh. 3. 9. Its true, as to the *measure* of Grace, and as to the *actings* of Grace, there is no Believer but is subject to his ups-and-downs; but it is as true, that as to the *Truth and Sincerity*

and so the soundness of Grace, there is no Believer that is subject to ups and downs, offs and ons.

4. This Objection seems to go upon a mistaken supposal, that there is a necessity that a Believer must be up and down in his Obedience, off and on in his walking with God. But there is no necessity of this: A Believer, tho he is compassed with a Body of Death, and Temptations round about; yet he may walk with God in a Covenant of Life and Peace, and such a constant exercise both of Faith and other Grace, as may be constantly clear and evident unto his own Conscience.

Fifthly, It is alledged, that if Assurance be gotten this way, by discerning a Work of Grace in a Mans own Heart, this Assurance must needs be weak and wavering, because there is much doubt and uncertainty concerning the Truth of saving Grace in the Heart.

1. I Answer, It is true, that there is in many who have true Grace, too much doubtfulness, and too much uncertainty, as to their own having Grace or not. But this weakness of Man must not turn us out of a way of God.

2. A Believer may come to know certainly and infallibly, and with fulness of Assurance, that there is Grace in his Heart. There is no necessity that this must always remain in the dark, and under a Cloud. Grace is a thing as sensible unto a renewed Soul that is made alive to God, as Corruption is; for the *actings* of Grace may be felt, as well as the *actings* of Corruption: A Believer may as certainly know and be assured that there is Faith, Repentance, Love to God, and the like in his Heart, as he
know.

knoweth that there is Corruption working there; they are in their Naturres equally Sensible. And as the Spirit of God for our humbling and unbottoming from Self, makes it clear and undeniable, and demonstrates it to Conscience, and ingraveth it in flaming Characters before our Eyes, *that there is Corruption in us*: So the same Spirit, as a Spirit of Adoption, writeth it in bright Characters, as with Beams of the Sun before the Eyes of Believers, that there is in their Hearts *Faith of the Operation of God, or other Graces of his own Working*. And hence it becometh satisfying, clear, evident, and undeniable to them: So that their Hearts cannot deny it, or stagger concerning it, whether there be Heart-changing Grace wrought in them or no.

3. *It is possible Assurance may be very strong and full, where Grace is but low and little.* The reason of it is, the strength and measure of Assurance doth not arise so much from the measure of Grace (Grace is but the means of Assurance) as it doth arise and grow up from the efficiency of the Spirit of Consolation bearing witness to this Grace. A Giant can strike a deep Wound with a little Weapon: The Spirit of Grace can give much Comfort and much Assurance where there is little Grace, making that little Grace very clear and evident, and pouring in upon the Soul, who it may be hath but little Grace; much of the *Oil of Gladness*. You may observe it in your own Experience, sometimes a little Sin, comparatively, Oh, how doth it trouble, wound, make the Heart to ache, and throb, and bleed within it self! What is the reason of it? The Spirit

Spirit of God, as a Reprover, chargeth home that little Sin, and presents before the Eyes of Conscience the vileness, the hatefulness, the aggravations of it, until the Heart be overwhelmed with very humbling Visions, it may be, of the vileness of a little Sin: Just so, on the contrary, the Spirit of Adoption and Consolation sheweth Grace, which it may be is but little; yet he maketh it clear, that it is true and saving Grace; and by making that out clear unto the Conscience, filleth the Soul with ravishing and overwhelming Consolation,

4. *We do not teach, or hold, that the Assurance of a Believer is in this life perfect.* It hath its defects, its weaknesses, 'tis Subject to doubts; and therefore, tho Grace be imperfect, which is the means of it, yet an imperfect Work of Grace may be the means of an imperfect Assurance. Now Assurance is not perfect in this Life; there is no Believer that is any more perfect in his Assurance than in any other Grace. It's true, our *Justification* is perfect; its true, our *Adoption* is perfect, and blessed be God they are so: but it is true that *Sanctification* and the Work of Grace is imperfect, and so is Assurance and Consolation imperfect.

Sixthly, It is alledged, that tho Assurance may be had by a Work of Grace as the means of it; yet a Work of Grace is not a clear Evidence; a satisfying Evidence; or at least not the first Evidence of a Mans good Estate.

I. I Answer, Let it but be granted to be an Evidence of a Mans good Estate, an Evidence that is so certain as to be *undeceiving*; and there needs not much Dispute or Contention about other things. But yet I conceive

these

these Allegations carry somewhat of mistake in them: For,

2. A Work of Grace is a *clear* and *certain* Evidence: it may be clear in *itself*, it may be clear to the *Conscience* of a Believer. A Believer may be as certain that he *loveth* God, as that he *hath sinned* against God; he may be as certain that he *believeth* in Christ, as ever he was certain, when he felt unbelief working in him, that there was such a Corruption as that in his Heart. And it is undeniable that God hath by an inviolable Law connected true Grace and a change of State together; he never changeth the State of any but he giveth Grace, Heart-changing Grace: He never gave Heart-changing Grace to any, but he did withal change their State: If the Covenant be changed in which a person standeth, his Image and Frame of Heart is changed: if *one* be, the *other* is: God hath linkt these together by such a Concatination, as neither Men nor Hell shall ever violate: and therefore a Work of Heart-changing Grace is a *certain* Evidence of a Mans good Estate.

3. And being a certain Evidence, it ought to be a *Satisfying* Evidence to a Believer. 'Tis true, tho it be discerned by the Conscience of a Believer, yet it will not be *satisfying*, unless the Spirit of God come in as a Spirit of Consolation. The Spirit of God must come in and satisfie the Soul that there is Grace in it, and he must satisfie the Soul that Grace is an infallible proof of a Change of State; the Spirit of God must come and take off that Bondage Frame of Heart which is Natural to us, that Jealousie of God, that Guilt upon our

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Consciences: the Spirit of God must come and be a Spirit of Adoption and Consolation unto the Soul, to make it satisfied with any strength or Joy: therefore the Apostle prayeth, *Rom. 15. 13. The God of hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope through the Power of the Holy Ghost.* There must go the Power of the Holy Ghost to it, to make a Soul abound in Joy and Peace even in that way of believing.

4. As to its being a *first* Evidence, I think a few things may give Satisfaction and clear up *that*. If by that Expression of a *first* Evidence be meant the *first* thing which God maketh Evident unto the Soul, when he beginneth to deal savingly with it and work graciously upon it; it is granted, that a Work of Grace *as already wrought* in the Heart, is not the *first* thing that God shews unto the Soul: No, the first thing which God shews unto the Soul is, that *there is no Grace in it*, that it is *under guilt*, that it stands under the Covenant of Works, *accursed*; the *first* thing God makes Evident unto the Soul when he comes to work effectually on it, is to *Convince it of Sin*, to *Convince it out of its Natural State*. Yea, I will grant further, that when the Spirit comes to *Encourage* and Comfort, the *first* thing he evidenceth to the Soul, is, the *fulnes* of Christ, the *freeness* of Grace, the Riches and Perfection of that *Redemption* which is wrought by Christ: He convinceth of *Righteousness* before he convinceth of *Judgment*. Nay, moreover, when the Spirit comes to any Believer as a Spirit of Consolation, to give him *Assurance*, to satisfie and settle his Heart that his
State

State is changed; I think the *first* thing that the Spirit doth, is not to shew a Believer the Grace which is in his own Heart, wrought by the Finger of the Holy Ghost; but it is to clear up unto the Soul the *Faithfulness* of God in his Word, the *Truth* of the Promise, and to strengthen a Believers Faith in *that*: for this is the first and leading thing in the *Sylogism* of Assurance, even an *Assent of Faith unto the Word of Promise*. The Spirit therefore when he comes to give Assurance, he clearth up *that*, maketh *that* Evident unto the Soul, he setteth and satisfieth the Heart about *that*, helpeth against those secret doubtings and staggerings which the Soul is subject to and hath found returning upon him about the *Truth* of the Promise, and about the *greatness* of the *things promised*, as Pardon of Sin, Acceptance of the Person, and his being made an Heir of Glory, and a Son of God. I say, the Spirit when he comes to give Assurance, he doth in the first place settle the Heart as to the Truth of the Word of Promise; and thence the Soul is carried with a full assent to subscribe unto it, and venture its All, and build its Confidence upon it. Now when the Spirit hath settled the Soul in the Faith of the Word of Promise, then the Spirit comes and shews *what he hath wrought* in the Soul, the Work of his own Grace which is wrought there, and how this answereth the Description that is made in the Promise of those to whom such and such Priviledges do belong.

APPLICATION.

- I. It serves to confute or remove that Prejudice

dice which a blind and wicked World takes up
 against Grace, against true and saving Grace,
 as if when a Man once had it, yea when a Man
 once setteth himself seriously to get it, *he must*
never see a good and merry day more. A blind
 and mistaken Prejudice: so far from having
 Truth in it, that the Just contrary is true,
 thou canst never have a good day till thou
 hast Grace in thy Heart. The Holy Ghost
 tells us, that the way to comfort and chearful-
 ness is a way of holiness; *the ways of Wisdom are*
Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace, Prov.
 3. 17. yea the Holy Ghost speaks as it were in ex-
 press Confutation and contradiction to this sinful
 Prejudice of a blind and mad World, telling us,
 that *Light is sown for the Righteous, and Gladness*
for the upright in Heart, Psal. 97. 11. There is
 Provision for it made by God, and it shall
 certainly spring up unto them first or last.
 The truth is, there are none that live comfort-
 ably, but only those who have Grace: And
 those that have Grace, whatever bitter things
 they may otherwise meet withal, yet they ei-
 ther do or may live Comfortably. Take a
graceless Person, who it may be hath the great-
 est affluence of worldly enjoyments; yet he
 liveth an uncomfortable Life: for he hath none
 of the *Consolations of God* within him, *delighting*
his Soul; none of the *Peace of God which passeth*
all understanding; but is an utter Stranger
 to it: Nay which is more, he is Subject unto
 secret Fears, and Bosom-anguish and Terrors.
 The Consciences of graceless Persons, tho they
 endeavour to divert and stifle them, do now
 and then give them secret Stabs and privy
 Strokes

Strokes, they give them bloody lashes, there is a *dreadful sound in their Ears* now and then, which makes them afraid, as he in *Job* speaks of the Hypocrites, *chap. 15. 21.* Tho it may be their Heads and Hearts are so full of the hurries of their Lusts at present, as that they entertain not, dwell not with these things; yet now and then they do, they are inforced to *meditate Terror*; at least when they think of appearing before God, and of the day of Judgment. The Thoughts of which day are comfortable and rejoicing to Believers who have Grace: they are so in the Nature of the thing, they should be so to them; *Comfort your selves, and comfort one another with these Words, 1 Thes. 4. 18.* what were they? The day of Judgment, and of Christ's descending from Heaven, the Trump of God sounding, the Dead arising, and all appearing before the Judgment Seat: *Comfort one another with these Words.* Ay, but these are dismaying Words whenever they come into the thoughts of a graceless Person, they are to him like the *writing upon the Wall to Belsazzar*, they make the *Loyns to Tremble*, and the *Knees to Smit together*: So great is the difference between the condition of a graceless Person, and a gracious Person; that which is terrible to the one, is comfortable to the other. The Saints of God therefore are Instances of *this*: they have met with hard and bitter things in the course of their Pilgrimage; but yet have been comfortable: take *Paul* for instance, *2 Cor. 11. 23.—27.* what a Man of Afflictions and Sorrows was he, in Imprisonments, Dangers, Deaths, Calamities, and Sufferings! He was rolled and tossed from one Affliction to another all

all the days of his Life, after he had Grace in his Heart: yet that same *Paul* was one of the most comfortable Men that ever the Earth bore: he gives you that account of himself, *Phil. 4. 11, 12. 2 Cor. 6. 10. as sorrowful, but always rejoicing; as sorrowful, that is but a Copy of his Countenance: as if he had said, that is but an appearance; the reality of the thing within, is this, we are always rejoicing. Thence he saith, 2 Cor. 1. 5. as his sufferings did abound, so his consolation did abound: Nay, so and much more his Consolations did abound by Christ Jesus.*

II. This Doctrine speaks Reproof

To them who labour to get Comfort without Grace. It is a preposterous, foolish, vain Course: For ever reckon upon it, never expect it, never think to have Comfort without Grace, you may possibly lay your Conscience asleep; and in that sleep you may fall a dreaming that things are well; that your State is good, while you are without Grace: but this sleep will not always last, that golden Dream of a self-flattering Heart will not always continue: No, that roaring Lion which is now laid asleep within thy Bosom, shall awake, and will rend thy very soul in pieces. The Prophet speaks of some who *Dream that they eat and drink, but they awake and behold they are empty and faint, Isa. 29. 8.* So will it be with thee, who settest up a building of Peace and Comfort to thy self, without getting Grace: thou mayest fall into a Dream that thy State is good, but when thou awaknest (and that thou shalt sooner or later) then thou wilt find thy self hungry, and thirsty, and empty. Yea, what that same Pro-
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phet faith of them who did forget the God of their Salvation, and were not mindful of the Rock of their strength; that they might plant pleasant Plants, and set them with strange slips, and in the day make their Plants to grow, and in the morning make their Seed to Flourish; but their Harvest should be a Heap, in the day of grief and of desperate Sorrow. *Isa. 17. 10, 11.* The same I may say to thee, thou mayest plant in thy own Heart strange Conceits and Apprehensions that things are well with thee, that thy State is good while without Grace; yea thou mayest (it may be) make thy Conceits to grow up to a very affecting height, thy Heart may be full of sweetness and Joy upon these Mistakes and Delusions: Ay, but in the day of Harvest it will be an Heap, Confusion and desperate Sorrow. What is the reason of it? Because thou buildest up unto thy self Peace without Grace. *Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of Hosts, with Thunder, and Earthquake, and with Storm, and Tempest, and the flame of devouring Fire. Chap. 29. 6.*

2. It reproveth them who have Grace and yet go without Comfort. Grace is the means, the way of Comfort and Assurance. You it may be think and are comfortably perswaded you have Grace; where is your Comfort then, your Peace and Assurance of your good Estate? You should say to you selves as she sometimes did, *if it be so why am I thus?* If I have Grace why am I thus, why do I go without that Peace of God which passeth all understanding ruling in my Heart? It is the Case of some that have Grace and fear the Lord, yet to walk in darkness, *Isa. 50. 10.* yea it is too much the

Case of some that think and know, and can give a good account and make it out, that they have Grace; and yet do not take in that Peace that should fill their Hearts and Minds. As he sometimes said to Amnon, *why art thou lean being the Kings Son?* So you should say, why are you so low in spiritual Joy and Triumph, since God hath wrought Grace in your Heart? You should look upon that Grace which is wrought in your Heart as a Token from Heaven that God hath loved you, as a Token that he will save you: accordingly you should improve it; you should not rest tho you have Grace, and discern that Grace in you, but should improve that Sight unto your own Comfort and rejoicing.

III. If Grace be the means of Assurance and Comfort, It should awaken and stir us all up to get Grace. Labour after it as you tender your own Comfort: As you would have Peace, and have your Consciences singing in your own Bosoms and telling you that you are the Sons and Daughters of God, and Heirs of Heaven, so must you labour to get Grace; Conscience will never according to God, speak Peace unless you get Grace: upon this account Grace is a principal Thing, a precious Thing, a necessary Thing. Is not Peace necessary? Conscience is the best Friend, and the worst Foe; Conscience can never be thy Friend or speak Peace to thee as to thy State without Grace: Nay, thou canst not (if Conscience be awake) but be full of sad and secret Fears what end God will make with thee, and what will become of thee at last, unless thou hast Grace. Labour therefore I say by any means

to get Grace: you should be restless in your selves without it; yea, you should be importunate and earnest with God for the working of it; you should give him no rest till He work Grace in thy Soul: For He will never speak Peace unto thee, unless he work Grace in thee.

S E R M O N XX.

I JOHN V. 13.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life; and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

YO U have heard there are four things from which that happy attainment of Assurance (which is here called knowing that we have eternal Life) doth arise.

1. *A Work of Heart-changing Grace;*
2. *The Word of Promise.*
3. *The Reflection and discerning by Conscience, both of the Work of Grace within, and the Word of Promise without.*
4. *The Influence of the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of Consolation.*

I have been some time upon the first of

these. That I may speak somewhat of the *Second*, I have pitched upon these Words: wherein ye have the Apostle giving an account unto these Believers whom he writeth to, of the *End* of his writing this Epistle: And he expresseth it in *two* Things, there was a *double* End of it.

One was; *That they might believe on the Name of the Son of God.* Yet they were such as did already believe: For so he saith of them in the beginning of the Verse, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God:* And yet he writeth unto them that *they might believe* on the Name of the Son of God, that they might believe *still*, believe *more and more*, *increase and abound*, and grow stronger and stronger in Faith. And indeed a Believer should not, nay, if he be a true Believer he cannot content himself with having believed *once* unto Life and Salvation, with having believed unto the Change of his State: But his Heart should be *set and fixed* for believing; believing will become the *Disposition of his Soul*, he will drive the Trade and follow the *Practice* of believing, he will be acting Faith *daily*: indeed he *lives* by Faith, so Paul, Gal. 2. 20. *The Life which I live in the Flesh is by the Faith of the Son of God.* I say, he *lives* by Faith.

The other *End* of the Apostle's writing this Epistle was *that they might know that they had Eternal Life.* This knowing that they had Eternal Life is nothing else but that which is commonly called *Assurance*: It is the Judgment of their own *Consciences*, and the believing assent of their own *Hearts* unto it, that they

they had Eternal Life. This *knowing* is not a bare knowing, it is not a dead, dry, lifeless, favourless Knowledge: But it is such a knowing as the *Heart* is touched withal, it is such a knowing as tendeth to and hath its Influence to make Joy spring up in their Souls: And therefore *that* which the Apostle here in the close of the Epistle calleth *knowing that they had Eternal Life*, in the beginning of it he calleth having their Joy full. Chap. 1. 4. *These things write we unto you that your Joy may be full.* To have their Joy full, and to know that they have Eternal Life, are both the same thing in the sense and intendment of the Holy Ghost: one supposeth the other; and the other inferreth that: *fulness of Joy* supposeth *knowing* that they have Eternal Life; and a right *knowing* by a Believer that he hath Eternal Life, inferreth and bringeth in *fulness of Joy* to his Heart. Now *this* the Apostle saith was the *End* of his writing this Epistle: *These things have I written*, saith he; and indeed the principal Scope of the Epistle, and that which is legible in every Line and Letter of it, and runneth through it, is to help Believers in this great Concern and inquiry of *knowing that they have Eternal Life*. That which is the end of *this Epistle*, is in a parallel Proportion the End of all Scriptures: that which this Part of the Word of God is ordained for, and constituted a means of, the whole Word of God is in its Kind and Place a means of. Which should hold out this Truth or Doctrine unto us; being the very thing before me.

That the Assurance and Comfort of a Believer is by the Word of God. I say, The Assurance and Comfort of a Believer, or a Believer

knowing that he hath *Eternal Life*, and having his *Heart filled with Joy* thereby, this is by the *Word of God*. The *Word of God* is a *Means* whereby a *Believer* cometh to attain the *Knowledge* that he hath *Eternal Life*, and cometh to have his *Heart filled with Joy* thereby.

The *Psalmist* hath his *Eye* often upon *this*, and telleth us how the *Word of God* had been his *Comfort* in his *Afflictions*, his *Song* in the *House of his Pilgrimage*, and how it had filled his *Heart* with *Joy*. *Psal.* 119. 49, 50, 52, 54. and in many other *Places*. The *Apostle Paul* is very expresse to this purpose, *Rom.* 15. 4. *whatsoever things were written afore time, were written for our learning, that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope*. *Comfort* is called *Comfort of the Scriptures*, because the *Word of God* is the *Means* of conveying and Communicating it, of working it in the *Heart*: and the *Hope* which the *Apostle* there speaketh of, is a *steadfast Expectation* of *Eternal Life* and *Glory*; and *this* saith he, we have through *Comfort of the Scriptures*.

There are *Two* things which I would speak to, for clearing up this *Doctrine*.

I. *What Word of God is it which is the Means of Assurance and Comfort to Believers?*

II. *How and in what way is the Word of God a means of Assurance and Comfort?* These two being gone through, will comprise all that I design to speak for clearing up this *Point*, to make the way clear to that *Application* of it that is before me.

I. *What Word of God is it?* It is the *written Word of God*: *these things have I written.* That Word of God which is the means of *Faith*, is also the means of *Assurance*: *these things have I written that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God, and that ye may know that ye have Eternal Life.* When I say the *written word of God*, the *Scriptures*, I do not confine and limit it so unto that which we commonly call the *Scriptures*, as to exclude the *Explication* and *Application* of it in any way of *God*. *Scripture Truths preached*, *Scripture Truths applied and opened* are means of *Assurance*. The Truth is, *God hath appointed that Ordinance of Preaching* as well as that of the *Scriptures*: and *Preaching* you know is to be bottomed and built upon the *Scriptures*, and is nothing else but an opening and applying of them: and *God hath designed that Ordinance of Preaching* not for *Conversion* only, but also for the *building up of Believers*. So the *Apostle* saith, *Eph. 4. 11, 12.* that *Christ hath given Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers*, for the *perfecting of the Saints*, for the *edifying of the Body of Christ*.

Now *Assurance* and *Comfort* is one great Part of their *Edification* and *building up*. I think *Church preaching*, *Preaching by Church-Officers* in a *Church* is principally intended for *Edification*, rather than *Conversion*, *1 Cor. 14. 22.* *Prophecyng serveth not for them that believe not, but for them that believe.* But. Certain it is, that the *Word of God* in the *Scripture*, opened and applied in any way according to *God*, according to any *Ordinance* of

his, is the means of Assurance; it is that whereby a Believers Joy of Faith is helped on. If you ask *more particularly* what Word of God is a means of Assurance? There may be need, and it is useful to inquire farther into it: And I shall express my mind about it in these *six* Things.

1. It is the *Gospel*, and not the *Law*,
2. 'Tis chiefly the *Promises* of the Gospel.
3. They are *those Promises* which do, by something in its own nature evident and sensible to a Believer's Conscience, describe one who is in Christ.
4. *The thing* by which one in Christ is described in Gods Word in order to Assurance and Comfort, is a *Work of Heart-changing Grace*.
5. This *Work of Heart-changing Grace* unto which the Scripture speaketh Comfort and Assurance, containeth under it two things; namely, *that Work of Grace* ordained of God to be the means of our ingrafting into Christ; and that *Work of Grace* which is a *Fruit of our being in him*.
6. Among those *Works of Grace* upon the Hearts of Believers which are *Fruits* of their being in Christ, there are *some* that are common to *all* Believers: but there are *others* which are proper and peculiar to some *Eminent and grown* believers: Both are means of Assurance; as I shall shew when I come to speak of them.

1. *It is the Gospel, and not the Law, that is the means of a Believers Assurance and Comfort.* For what is it that he is assured of? 'Tis *Eternal Life*: now *Eternal Life and immortality* are

are brought to light through the Gospel, 2 Tim. 1. 10. the thing he is assured of is his good Estate, his *being in Christ*: now the Law or Covenant of Works speaks nothing of any Mans being in *Christ* because *He* was not revealed by and in the *Law* as a Head and Root for any of the Sons of Men to stand under: the *first Adam* was then their Head: the Law speaks nothing but wrath and Curse and Condemnation to all the Seed of *Adam*, Gal. 3. 10. &c. And therefore Knowledge of a good Estate, or Assurance and Comfort can never be by the *Law*. Its true, if Man had not fallen, he might have had an Assurance of his present acceptance with God, and of his abiding in the Favour of God, according to the Terms and Tenor of that Covenant: But Man having once sinned and fallen, and that Covenant being broken, it is become for ever unable to give any Peace and Comfort, any Assurance of a good Estate to any of the Children of *Adam*. Rom 8. 1, 2, 3. The Apostle tells us, *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh but after the Spirit: for it is the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus which sets free from the Law of Sin and Death: for what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the Flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful Flesh, for Sin condemned Sin in the Flesh.* The *Law* could neither free from Condemnation nor from the Law of Sin and Death, it was become weak: and as it could not free us, so it could never let us know that we were free from Condemnation, that we were delivered from the Law of Sin and Death: No, this must be by a *new*, by another Con-

Constitution of God, even the *Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ*. In a word, it is not the Covenant of Works, but the Covenant of Grace which is that *Part of the Word* which is the means of Assurance.

2. *In the Gospel 'tis the Promises of the Gospel*. These are the chief means of a Believers being assured of his good Estate, that he hath Eternal Life, that he is past from Death to Life. I do not take *Promises* in that strict narrow sense, as only laying an Engagement upon God concerning his communicating of a good thing to come: but I take *Promises* here in a large and more comprehensive sense. By *Promises* I mean not only *explicit* but *implicit Promises*. We read, *1 Job. 3. 23. this is God's Commandment that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ*. Now this *Command* of believing may be a means of Assurance and Comfort. How so? Because there is an *implicit Promise* annexed to the *Command*: for tho' in that place it is not so, yet elsewhere it is; *he that believeth hath everlasting Life, Job. 3. 15, 16, 36, and 5. 24.* All the *Declarations* which God hath made concerning Christ as the Saviour of Sinners, and all the *Offices* and *performances* of Christ, and his *attainments* thereby, his *Qualifications* and endowments for them; I comprise all these under the Word of *Promise*, because they have *implicit Promises* in them all. If Christ be set forth as a *Saviour*, this implieth that they that go to him shall be *saved* by him. And so I might say of all the rest of the discoveries and declarations which God in his Word maketh concerning Christ: and the reason of it is, because these contain

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in them somewhat of the *Object* of Faith; now the Exhibition or Proposal of the *Object* of Faith must of necessity imply a *Promise*; a *Promise* either *explicit*, or *implicit*. There can be no Faith without a *Promise*: for Faith is nothing else but a *relying upon God for the Performance of what he hath said*. Faith turneth back upon God for what he hath promised; the Language, Genius, and working of Faith is, to take in what God hath spoken, and say, *be it unto me according to thy Word*, Luk. 1. 38. So speaketh *Mary* upon that Message sent her by the Angel; and *ver. 45.* 'tis said to her, *blessed is she that believed*: Her taking in what God by the Angel promised, and her Heart ecchoing back unto it, and saying *be it unto me according to thy Word*, *this* is that which is called her *believing*. So when God hath set forth *Christ* to be a *Propitiation*, and offered Pardon and Eternal Life in *Christ*: If the Heart close in with *Christ* for this, or close in herewith, and eccho back to these Declarations about *Christ*, and say *be it unto me according to thy Word*: this is *believing*. Which sheweth plainly that in those Revelations of *Christ* there is a *Promise* implied and included: they have a *Promise* always going along with them. In the Gospel, if you take it largely, there are *Commands*, declaring how Believers ought to walk worthy of the High and Holy calling wherewith they are called: these are *in* it; but they properly belong to the *Law*, as the *Law* is a *Rule of Life*: tho they are taken into the Gospel, taking the Gospel in that Comprehensive sense, for the whole *Constitution and Council of God* concerning the way of bringing Sinners

ners to eternal Salvation. For tho it be only *Christ*, and the Promises of *him*, and by *Faith* in him, that God hath ordained to bring a Sinner into a *State of Life*: yet to bring him into the full *Fruition* and Injoyment of *Eternal Life in Glory*, *Obedience to the Moral Law* is the *Way* which God hath ordained he should walk in.

3. Among the Promises of the Gospel, *they are chiefly, nay only those Promises which give some Description of the Persons to whom they belong; that are the means of a Believers Assurance and Comfort.* Multitudes of Promises there are in the Book of God that have such a Description annexed to them, a Description of the Persons to whom they belong, by somewhat that is proper and peculiar to them: now these Promises only are the means of a Believers knowing that he hath *Eternal Life*. For take any Promise in the Book of God without such a Description of the Person to whom it belongeth, as being a Person in *Christ*, and no Man under Heaven can know himself to be meant in that Promise, no Mans Conscience hath a Warrant and Ground to pass that Judgment concerning himself, that he is the Person intended in this good Word of God. The thing assured of is *Eternal Life*: Now there is no *Eternal Life* but *in Christ*, and hence the Persons to whom *Eternal Life* is given and doth pertain, are, and must needs be Persons in *Christ*. And hence the Promises which make us know that we have *Eternal Life* must be such Promises as have annexed some Description of the Persons that are *in Christ Jesus*. And when I say some Description of them I mean a *Description*

tion of them by something that is discernable unto a Soul that is alive, and is evident unto a Conscience that is inlightned: for the Description else would be in vain and useless as to this purpose. To describe the Person that hath Eternal Life by somewhat that he cannot discern in himself, would never yield him Assurance; and therefore could not be a means of his knowing his Estate. I say it must be somewhat that is *sensible* unto a Soul that is alive, and is evident unto a Conscience that is inlightned; that so it may be clearly discerned and infallibly known: it must be somewhat which a Believer by his own spiritual feeling and by his own Reflection may be as sure and certain of, as he is of any thing in his own Heart: The intendment and design of the Promises being to bottom and beget a Knowledge and Assurance that a Man hath Eternal Life, they must describe a Person by some such thing as this. It is true, there is no Word of God that saith it concerning any particular Person by *Name*, that he hath Eternal Life: I mean, by the *name* by which Men are commonly known one to another among Men: but yet the Promises of God that are the means of Assurance do as certainly, as infallibly describe those that are in Christ, and so have Eternal Life, as if they named them by name.

4. Hence it followeth that the Promises giving Assurance, are Promises which do describe Persons in Christ by a work of *saving and Heart-changing Grace wrought upon them*. For there is nothing else that is *peculiar* to those who are in Christ, and is withal *sensible* unto a Soul that is alive, and to be *discerned* and known

by an enlightned Conscience, *but only this.* There are many *other* things which do belong to one that is in Christ, high Dignities and relative Priviledges, his *Justification*, his *Adoption*, and the like; yea, *Election* and *Redemption* belong unto one that is in Christ, yea, unto *all* that are in Christ: but *assuring* Promises do not describe Believers by *these* things: and the reason is, because these things are *secret*, and not *immediately discernable* by the Believers Conscience: he may indeed come to know them; but he knoweth them not *immediately*, by spiritual Intuition and *Sense* as I may say; as he knoweth or may know the Work of Gods Grace upon his Heart. He may know these Dignities and Priviledges, that he was *Redeemed*, and was *elected*: but how knoweth he them? 'Tis by way of *Collection*, he gathereth and concludes so from somewhat else that is *more* knowable more *immediatly* discerned by him. But there is nothing in a Believer that is *discerned*, and so nothing that can be an *assuring* Token and mark of his good Estate; but only some Work of *Heart-changing Grace wrought in him.*

5. *This Work of Heart-changing Grace* by which assuring Promises describe him that hath Eternal Life containeth two things; I think there are two great passages of Heart-changing Grace: The one is that Work of Grace which God hath ordained to be a means of *Vital Union to Christ*; of a Believers being *in Christ*, and *ingrafting* in to him. The other is that Work of Heart-changing Grace upon him which is the *Fruit* and *Consequent* of his being *in Christ.*

(1.) The first of these is *Effectual Calling*: for we are called into fellowship with Christ, 1 Cor. I. 9. *Effectual* and *saving Calling* is nothing else but when by a mighty Impression of Power and Grace upon the Heart, it cometh off from Sin and self, unto Christ as a Saviour. And this Motion, this working of the Heart (as I may say) towards Christ, this closing with him, this giving up it self unto Christ, is ordained of God to be the means of our *living Union* unto Christ; we are by this ingrafted into him: for this living Union between a Soul and Christ is *mutual*: Christ indeed first layeth hold on the Soul and draweth him by his Spirit: but the Soul cometh being drawn, being drawn it runneth, being apprehended and laid hold on by Christ, it doth reciprocally lay hold on and close in with Christ. Thus being ingrafted into Christ, this *living Union* unto Christ is brought about and effected. Thence those Promises that are made unto *believing* are all of them *assuring Promises*: and you know the Scripture is full of these; *he that believeth shall not see Death; shall not come into Condemnation: he hath Eternal Life.* All Promises I say that are made to *believing* are *assuring Promises*: the reason it, *believing* is ordained by an inviolable Ordinance of Heaven to be the means, to be that Work of Grace upon the Soul, whereby the Soul is married unto Christ: it is matched unto the Son of God in its believing on him. And hence,

(2.) Those Promises that describe a Person in Christ by *Sanctification*, and *new Obedience*, by his being a *new Creature*, these are *assuring Promises*. And the Scripture is likewise full of these

these, Blessed are the undefiled in the way, *Psal. 119.*
 1. There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ, *Rom. 8. 1.* But how is a Person known to be in Christ? You are told in the next words, *who walk not after the Flesh but after the Spirit.* The Spirit of Adoption crying in the Heart of a Believer *Abba Father*, is an Evidence of the same thing, for there is a Word of Promise declaring it, that such a one is a Child of God, *Gal. 4. 6. because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying Abba Father.* The like I may say concerning a Spirit of filial and Evangelical Obedience; and indeed of all the Graces of the Holy Spirit, that are Graces of Sanctification, wherein we are conformed unto the Image of Christ, and made like unto him, according to our poor weak Measure, in this World; Promises made to these Graces, being Promises rather made unto the Persons in Christ, who are described by these Graces in their Hearts and appearing in their lives, are assuring Promises.

6. Among these gracious and Heart-changing Works upon the Souls of Believers, which are Fruits of their being in Christ, there are some things that are common unto all that have Eternal Life: But there are other things which are found only in some Eminent and grown Believers. Now both these are means of Assurance: and Promises made to them, are assuring Promises. A Spirit of Adoption and Prayer, a Spirit of son-like love and fear are found in all Believers; there is no Babe in Christ but his Heart is instructed and framed to cry *Abba Father*: there is no bruised Reed

so weak, there is no *smoking Flax* so dark, but there is somewhat of the Truth of these things in him. But then there are some *other Attainments* that are peculiar to *strong Men*, unto *grown Christians*: Now, concerning *these*, the Promises describing Persons by them, are indeed *assuring* comforting Promises. But yet the Argument holdeth not the other way. They in whom they *are*, their State is good; yet it will not hold, that they in whom they are *not* found, their State is *bad*. We may argue upon those things which are common to all that are in Christ, thus: *If a man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. 8. 9. and *if a man have the spirit sent into his heart, he may conclude, he is a son of God*, Gal. 4. 6. But now, as to those things that are the Attainment of *grown Believers*, and consequently of *some only*, the *Presence* of them is an infallible Argument of a Man's *good Estate*, tho' the *Want* of them be no Evidence of his *bad Estate*. Take an Instance of one, *Rom. 5. 3.* the Apostle saith, *We rejoyce in hope of glory; nay, we glory in tribulations.* This is not the Attainment of *every Believer*; it was the Apostle's, it is that which every Believer hath *Ground* and *Warrant* for, which every one should *press after*; yet every one doth not attain to such a Strength of Grace and Consolation. Now when any Soul is able thus to rejoyce in Tribulations, and in Hope of the Glory of God, it is an infallible Argument that his State is *good*; for the Word assureth it to him. But the Want of it is no Argument, his State is *bad*; the Word speaketh no such thing. In the same *Chapter, v. 11.* the Apostle telleth us, that he, and others such

as he, *gloried and rejoiced in God*, (it is the same Word) they *gloried in God*. Every Believer cannot do so; every Believer *bopesth in God, trusteth in God, his Heart cleaveth to God*. Ay, but every one doth not presently arise so high as to make his *Boast in God, to triumph in God*. Now this triumphing and glorying in God, tho' some Believers be described by it, yet it is not *as Believers, as Persons in Christ*; but it is as Persons *grown to a Pitch and Stature towards a perfect Man in Christ*. To give another Instance, 1 Pet. 1. 6, 8. the Apostle telleth us, those Believers who were then in *Heaviness, through manifold Temptations*; yet, tho' they had not seen Christ, they loved him, and had believed on him; and believing, they *did rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*. Now in that same Text there are Three things: There is *believing in Christ, and loving Christ*. These are common to all who have Eternal Life, to all that are in Christ; there is none in Christ, but he *believeth on him*; there is none in Christ, but his Heart *loveth him*. But there is a third thing, *Rejoicing in Christ with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*: This many an one who is in Christ, hath not yet attained. And altho' when this be arrived at, the Promise of God assureth such an one that he hath Eternal Life; yet when a Soul goeth mourning and drooping, and in Darkness, without Assurance, provided he *love Christ*, provided he be a *Believer*, the Word of God doth also assure him that he hath Eternal Life, his State is good.

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That is all I will say unto the first thing, *What Word of God it is which is the Means of Assurance.* It is the Word of the Gospel; and in the Gospel, it is the Promises. What Promises? 'Tis those that give some Description of Persons in Christ, describing them by somewhat that is discernable to an enlightned Conscience, and sensible unto a Soul that is alive. There is nothing that is so, but only a Work of Heart-changing Grace: And that Work of Heart-changing Grace hath these two things in it; that Grace which God hath made a Means of being in Christ, and of changing the State; and that Grace which is the Effect and Fruit of being in Christ, and of a Change of State. And among these Fruits there are some things common to all Believers, and other things which are only the peculiar Attainments of such as are past Babes, and are strong Men in Christ.

II. *How, and in what way is the Word of God a Means of Assurance?* There are two ways how the Word of God worketh, and hath an Influence hereunto.

I. *As it is that way of God which the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of Comfort, delighteth to breathe in, and to accompany.* It is *vehiculum Spiritus*; the Spirit of God accompanieth the Word of God. *My spirit that is upon thee, and my word which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed,* Isa. 59. 21. The Word and Spirit go together; the Word without the Spirit cannot enlighten, or convert, so neither can it comfort and assure; it can do nothing without the Spi-

rit's Efficacy, the Spirit's Presence in it, and working with it. The Spirit without the Word will not do it, he will not assure and comfort. The Truth is, he can't do it, according to that way he hath set down for himself to give Assurance and Comfort in. Assurance is the Judgment of a Man's Conscience that he hath Eternal Life; it is a knowing and believing the Word of God to him. Now this knowing and believing, how is it wrought? It is wrought by the Spirit, as the Efficient; but the Means by which the Spirit worketh it, is the Word of God. As we use to say of Conversion, that the Spirit doth not, will not convert without the Word, that is his own Ordinance for that End; so we may say as to Comfort, he will not assure and comfort but by the Word; for it is his own Ordinance for that End, as Ezek. 2. 2. *When he spake unto me, the spirit entred into me, and set me upon my feet.* So it is true concerning Conversion, and it is true concerning Assurance and Comfort; it is by God's speaking in the Word that the Spirit entereth; the Spirit of Conversion for Conversion, and the Spirit of Consolation for Assurance.

2. The Word is the Means of a Believer's Assurance, or knowing that he hath Eternal Life, as it is the Ground and Bottom upon which that Knowledge and Assurance is built. The main and principal thing in Assurance, is the Word, the Word of Promise. It is true, there must be a Work of Grace, the Reflections of a Man's own Conscience, and the Influence of the Holy Spirit: But it is the Word, the Word of Promise, that is the main Pillar and Ground of this Assurance and Knowledge. It must needs be

so,

so, because Assurance is an Assent of Faith. In Assurance the Soul doth not only know rationally, but it knoweth and believeth: We have known and believed the Love that God hath to us, saith this Apostle, chap. 4. 16. Now Faith is always built upon God's Word, it is an Assent unto Divine Testimony. Some have made a Comparison between the Influence of the Spirit, as the efficient Cause of Assurance, and the Influence of the Word of God as the Ground and Bottom of it. There is no great need of making any such Comparison; but this is sure, that the Foundation and Bottom of Assurance is God's Word. God's Word is so the Foundation of it, as that a Motion or Suggestion of the Spirit may not be believed, ought not to be assented unto, but only as it is agreeable to the Word, and cometh in the Authority and Majesty of the Word of God. A Suggestion of the Spirit doth not formally bind Conscience unto an Assent; but that which taketh hold upon Conscience, and maketh a Man guilty, and maketh it his Sin, if he subscribe not, and assent not unto it, is the Word of God.

But you will enquire, it may be, a little further, *How is the Word of God the Means of a Believer's Assurance of his good Estate?*

There are Three things may be said for Answer, and they do each of them contribute and jointly concur to a Believer's knowing that he hath Eternal Life, and having his Heart full of Joy thereby.

1. *The Word doth reveal the Greatness of the Privileges of a Believer.* It revealeth the Happiness of his Estate, in that he hath Eternal Life: There is abundance of comfortable and

Heart-rejoicing Matter contained in those two Words, *Eternal Life*.

2. The Word is a Means of Assurance and Comfort, as it doth discover and tell us who they are that are invested with these glorious Privileges: Describing the Persons, describing them by things peculiar unto them, by things that have (according to the inviolable Constitution of an unchangable God) an infallible Connexion with Eternal Life.

3. The Word worketh too for Comfort and Assurance, as it doth give us abundant Relief and Satisfaction of Heart, touching the infallible Certainty of the Promises. It shews us that eternal Life is sure; it is sure unto those to whom the Word speaketh it; 'tis sure as the Pillars of Heaven; it is sure, in Defiance of all that is found either within thee, or hanging about thee, or that thou art liable to, which seems to oppose thy having Eternal Life. But of these things I may speak (God willing) hereafter. All I shall do at present shall be only one Word of

APPLICATION.

It sheweth you one Reason why some Believers go without Assurance and Comfort. It is because you do not attend and apply your selves to the Word of God; you consult not *that*, improve not and make not use of *that* as you should do. The Word of God is an Ordinance of God for Assurance and Comfort. 'Tis true, there are many other Causes; but *this* is oft-times one very great Cause why some, to whom Comfort belongeth, go without it. There is either

unskilful-

unskilfulness in this Word of Righteousness and Comfort ; or there is *Neglect* of it, and not improving it ; or else there is (which is as bad as either of the other) a secret *Questioning* and *Disbelief* of it.

I. Sometimes there is *Unskilfulness in the Word of Righteousness and Comfort*. Believers are dark and take not in the Gospel, and the Promises of it, in the true Tenour of them ; they take not in, nor consider the *Freeness* of the Promises : And hence are all those Objections which rise in the Hearts of some Believers against their own being in a good Estate. I have done (saith a Soul) such and such things against God, I have been such a grievous Sinner, and so vile before God. Be it so, be it that thou art viler than thou canst conceive ; yet the Promise of the Gospel, which maketh over and assureth Eternal Life unto thee, is free, the Tenour of it (I say) is free ; the *Righteousness of Christ is upon all, without difference, who do believe* ; the greatest, the vilest Sinners, as well as the least, provided only that they be *in Christ*. And Sin (I say it again, it is a great Word, and a comfortable Word) Sin, whereof the *Soul* hath been guilty, be it never so much, never so great, is no Hinderance of a Soul's being in Christ ; still provided that God giveth him a Heart to betake himself to Christ, and to close in with him. Christ never did, he never will refuse any who by Faith come unto him ; he will never put in that Exception against any Sinner that cometh to him, *Thou hast been so and so before me*. No, the Word is, *he will in no wise cast out any that come*, Joh. 6. 37. be they who

they will, what they will, whatever they have done; yet he will in no wise cast out such. This Ignorance, and not considering the Tenour of the Gospel, and the *Freeness* of it, is a Bottom Cause of the Want of Assurance in many a poor Believer. The like I might shew concerning the *Firmness* and *Certainty* of the Word of Promise. But,

2. There is in some Believers a *Neglect of the Word*. They do not *search* the Book of God for assuring, comforting Promises; but their very Minds are turned aside and carried off from the Word of God. Their Inquiry is not what the *Word* of God speaketh, but rather what *others* think of them; or it may be they expect some *immediate Revelation* from Heaven in an extraordinary way; but they neglect the *Word* of God, neglect searching into *that*, neglect acquainting themselves with *that*. If ever thou wouldest have Comfort and Assurance, study the Scripture, keep close to *that*; *Joh. 5. 39. Search the Scriptures, for in them ye have eternal life.*

3. There is secret Disbelief of the Scriptures. And the Truth of it is, Pardon and Life to a guilty Creature, Life to a Sinner, to a condemned Sinner, *Eternal Life*, and that so glorious and rich as the Gospel holdeth it forth, 'tis so great, so surprizing, so astonishing, as that if God had not said it in his Word, we might well stagger at it, well doubt about it, might well disbelieve and question it: But since God hath said it, and hath so confirmed it by his Word unto us, it is our Duty to believe in the Face of all Discouragements; it is our Duty to believe and give a firm and full Assent to the Truth

Truth of it, tho' it seem never so incredible, never so impossible. But this secret staggering of Heart at the Promise, through Unbelief, is the Bottom Cause of the Discomfort and Unassuredness of many a Believer: They say, as sometimes those Persons did in another Case, *How can this be?* Luke 1. 34. Joh. 3. 4, 9. But the only way in this Case, is, to cast thy self upon the Stream of the Promise, to yield up thy self to that, and do as Abraham did; be considered not his own Body then dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's Womb, Rom. 4. 19. So do not you consider any thing that may be said against the Truth of the Word of God, or his Performance of the Promises of it; but believe and be fully perswaded, that what God hath promised, he is able also to accomplish and perform: And rest thou upon that. And this is the way to have Assurance established in thy Conscience, that thou hast Eternal Life, tho, thou hast a thousand and a thousand times over feared, and been ready to conclude thy self a Child of Eternal Death.

S E R-

SERMON XXI.

I JOHN V. 13.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life; and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

THE Doctrine I observed was to this purpose, *That Assurance of eternal Life is known by the Word of God. Or, The Word of God is the Means of Assurance and Comfort to Believers.*

There were Two things to be spoken to, to clear up this Doctrine:

I. *What Word of God is it that is meant when we say, the Word of God is the Means of Assurance?*

II. *How doth the Word of God contribute and work towards the Assurance of a Believer?*

I am upon the Second of these, *How is the Word of God a Means of Assurance?*

I. As it is that Appointment of God in which the Holy Spirit breathes as a Spirit of Assurance and Consolation. There can be no Assurance and Comfort without the Working of the Spirit: The Spirit will not work without the Word, and the Word cannot give it without the

the Spirit. In saying therefore, that the Word is the Means of Comfort, I am far from excluding the Spirit of God and his Influence hereinto: But the Word is that Way and Means which the Spirit loveth to make use of. And hence ye have them so remarkably joined together in Scripture, *Isa. 59. 21. My spirit and my word shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, &c.* The Word and Spirit go together. As they go together in Conversion, so they do in Assurance and Comfort. The Word without the Spirit is but a dead Letter; and a Spirit perswading a Man that he hath Eternal Life, if it be without the Word, it is an uncertain Guide, *1 Thess. 5. 19, 20. Quench not the spirit, saith the Holy Ghost; but he adds withal, Despise not Prophecies:* The Word of God and the Spirit of God must be jointly attended; if Prophecying be despised, the Spirit is quenched: That is, if the Word of God be cast by and neglected, it is a grieving and checking of the Spirit and his Motions in us, and his Workings on us. *My words, saith Christ, are spirit and life, Joh. 6. 63.* There is a living Efficacy of the Spirit that goeth along with the Word: The Spirit, as to his quickening and comforting Influence, resideth in the Word; we must not therefore seperate what God hath joined. God, in his Working of us unto Grace, and for Glory, hath joined his Word and Spirit together; the Spirit, as the principal Efficient, the Word as the Instrument in the Hand of the Spirit: The Word therefore is called the Sword of the Spirit, *Eph. 6. 17. Take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God:* The Sword of the Spirit

Spirit to cut asunder the Knots and Snarcs which Satan endeavours to hamper the Soul by, and that not only in the way of Holiness and Obedience, but in the way of Assurance and Comfort. It is the Sword of the Spirit, the Means and Ordinance which the Spirit taketh into his own Hand, and manageth by his own Arm, which we ought to be in a Dependence on, tho' with an Eye unto the Influence and Help of the Spirit.

2. *As it is the Ground upon which Assurance is built.* The God of Heaven speaketh unto a Soul in his Word, and saith, *Thou hast Eternal Life*: And this Testimony of God in his Word is the Bottom of that Assent of Faith wherein the Essence of Assurance lyeth. David sometimes prayed, *Psal. 35. 3. Say unto my Soul, I am thy Salvation*: God had said it in his Word. The Word of God is the Testimony or Witness of God that a Soul hath Eternal Life; and this Witness or Testimony is the Foundation and Bottom of a Believers Faith: so that if ye have a Believer, how he knoweth he hath Eternal Life? his answer must be, *because God hath said it*. But where hath God said it? God hath spoken it in his Word: there, and there only doth God say, both of Believers in general, and of every particular Believer, that he hath Eternal Life. And the Word being the Bottom and Foundation upon which faith of Assurance is built, therefore we are directed to examine both our Hopes and Fears by the Word: try the Spirits, *1 John 4. 1.* try all suggestions which are cast in upon you, all motions that are made to you, try them: How must we try them?

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The way of tryal is to bring them to the Word of God, if they speak according to *that*, then embrace them, then subject your selves unto them: but if they speak not according to the Word, there is no light in them. *Isa. 8. 20.*

Objections, Some object against having Assurance by the Word: say they, it must be by the Spirit, and his inward assistance and suggestions, else we subject the Holy Spirit to the letter of the Word.

The Answer is plain and obvious; we do subject the suggestions or inward Motions of the Holy Ghost unto the Scriptures: and we may and ought to do so; for the Scripture is the Word of God, it is indited by the Holy Spirit, the Word is the Testimony and Witness of the Spirit himself. Now the private whispers of the Spirit (suppose according to the Truth) unto any particular Persons Heart, are to be subjected to and tryed by the publick witness of the Holy Ghost in the Word. The publick witness of the Holy Ghost is the Rule or Standard by which the private Motions of the same Holy Spirit are to be tryed and examined. And this is no disparagement unto the Holy Ghost, that his private Motions should be tryed by this publick Rule and Standard which he himself hath given: nay it is an honour and a Glory to him; for it is still his Word, his Rule which we try them by, it is his Voice, his witness that we do examine them by, and either reject or receive them. There is in all the Motions of the Holy Ghost an influence of Power indeed in the making of them: but there is not that Authority which bindeth

bindeth Conscience unto an assent of Faith, and unto a receiving of them. In all the Motions of the Holy Ghost, that which bindeth Conscience is their agreement with the Word of God which is the *Rule of Tryal*, the Touchstone and Standard to which they are to be brought, and by which they are to be tried.

But if you ask more particular, *how doth the Word work towards Assurance that a Believer hath Eternal Life?* I Answer, the Word doth three things, which do all of them concur unto the raising this building of Assurance in a Believers Soul.

1. The Word declareth the *Priviledges* that a Believer hath.

2. The Word declareth *who are the Persons* to whom the *Priviledges* do belong.

3. The Word giveth a full satisfying *Security* unto the Faith of a Believer concerning the Truth and performance of the Promises.

1. The Word declares the *Priviledges* which a Believer is invested with. The *Priviledges* are of exceeding great and high as would never have entered into the Heart of Man to have thought of, if God had not revealed them, 1 Cor. 2. 9. *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of Man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* *Priviledges* they are of an higher Nature and Dignity than to have Devils subject unto you, *Rejoice not in this, that Devils are subject unto you, but rather Rejoice because your names are written in Heaven,* Luke 10. 17, 20. *Priviledges* I say, which never would have entered into the Heart of Man to have

thought

thought of; much less to have believed that any of the sinful Sons of Men should be made partakers of them, if God had not spoken such things: but as they came out of the *Heart* and *Council* of God; so they are revealed and declared in the Word of God. The Text here giveth us an account of them in those two comprehensive Words *Eternal Life*.

(1.) *Life*. This is a very choice enjoyment, it is the choicest of all enjoyments; that without which nothing else could be enjoied. *Spiritual Life* is a more choice and high Priviledge. Look as *Life natural* resulteth from the Union of Soul and Body: So *spiritual Life* compriseth under it *Union* unto God, and *Communion* with him.

[1.] *Union unto God*. Men are broken off from God by Sin: *Iniquity hath separated between God and them*, *Isa. 59. 2*. And being so broken off, it could never have entered into their thoughts or Hearts, that *sinful Men* should be united unto God again; had not God revealed it in his Word: but revealed it he hath, as a thing which was designed by himself, and accomplished by *Christ*, who died to bring us unto God, *1 Pet. 3. 18*. to make up the Breach, and to bring about the Union between God and us. Hence we come to enjoy God as our own God, to have an interest in this God as our God, *Psal. 48. 14*. I say we come to enjoy him as our Portion; *the Lord is my Portion saith my Soul*, *Lam. 3. 24*. Believers come to have a Property and Interest in him. That is the first thing in Life, that *God is theirs*: God and they are brought together again. And this is in *Jesus Christ*, it is don by him,

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in the vertue of his Performances with God : but done it is, God and they are brought together again : And this Union between God and them is established in an everlasting Covenant.

[2] There is contained in Spiritual Life, *Communion* too. The Soul *receiveth*, and God *giveth* precious things : For Communion lyeth in *mutual giving and receiving*. I say therefore God giveth, and the Soul receiveth from him precious things, where there is Communion with God. I will give you but two Instances of the *precious things* which the Soul receiveth from God : *viz.* His *Favour*, and his *Image*. The *Favour* of God : this the Soul receiveth, 'tis favoured by him, it is received by him, accepted with him, made a Son, a Daughter, an Heir of the living God. It receiveth not only this favour from God ; but it receiveth also the *Image* of God : this is wrought in it, and maintained on it by the Spirit of Christ given to it. Hence the Soul is made like unto the Image of God : look as in *Glory* it shall bear the Image of the Heavenly Man the Lord Jesus , so it *now* beareth that Image in part ; it hath somewhat of it communicated to it, 'tis made *partaker of a Divine Nature*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. This is the *Life* which the Word doth reveal, and doth assure unto Believers,

(2.) This Life is also *Eternal*. And that heighteneth it and maketh it more wonderful and glorious. *Adam* had a happy and blessed Life while he stood ; but there was this Defect and Infirmary in it, it was not *Eternal*, it was not *secured* unto him as to the Eternity of it.

It might have proved Eternal if he had stood: but it was subject to that contingency and uncertainty which his Obedience and standing was subject unto. But now with Believers the Case is otherwise, their Life is infallibly Eternal; there is Provision made for maintaining and securing of it unto them inviolably. Now put both these together, *Life*; consisting in Union to God, and Communion with him; and the *Eternity* or immutability of this Life: and so you see the first thing that the Word doth towards Assurance and Comfort, it doth declare that this is the Priviledge and Happiness of Believers that they have *Eternal Life*.

2. The Word doth discover *who they are to whom these Priviledges do belong*. This answereth that Objection which is apt to arise in the Hearts of Believers, when they hear in the Word of God of the great things that God designeth and will Communicate unto those he hath loved: they are apt to have this arise in their Hearts. *Alas what are these Priviledges to me?* Happy Souls they be who are interested in them, but do these things belong to me? They can take little Comfort, get little Joy from them, because that doubt remaineth with them and returneth upon their Hearts. God therefore in his Word doth declare *who the Persons are to whom Eternal Life is given*: God declareth this in his Word not by their names by which they are known among men *John, Thomas, and the like*: but he declareth it by such a *punctual Description*, such plain and certain Characters, as that a Believer may know infallibly concerning himself, and say, *I am the Man, I am the Woman,*

this poor Soul of *mine* is the Soul concerning whom the God of Heaven hath spoken of his Love from Everlasting to Everlasting. Look as it is in the *Threatnings* and *Terrours* of the Law: God doth not there speak unto any Man by name: no, but he speaketh to *Sinners* who are *guilty* of *such* and *such* things, and he telleth them the Judgment of God concerning them is, *that they who commit such things are worthy of Death*, Rom. 1. 32. This taketh hold upon the Consciences of Sinners, when God will cause it so to do; and filleth them with Trouble, Terrour and Anguish. So when God will speak Peace and let in Comfort, this is the way he taketh; he declareth in his Word, and maketh that Word take hold upon the Conscience of a Believer when he pleaseth, that *such* and *such* have Eternal Life, they in whom *such* and *such* things are wrought have Eternal Life. Thus the Holy Ghost in the Word doth decipher and describe them, doth as I may say set marks upon them: and it is a thing, and a principal thing meant in that Expression of being *sealed unto the day of Redemption*, which you find used by the Holy Ghost Eph. 1. 13, and 4. 30. 2 Cor. 1. 22. A seal set upon a Person is nothing else but a mark or Badge, a Badge of Propriety and Interest, to show that they belong to such a one. God's sealing a Believer unto the day of Redemption is nothing else but his making such Impressions on them as do indicate and Evidence that *that* Soul belongeth to God.

If you look into the Scripture you shall find it doth not only tell us of great and glorious Priviledges, and Blessings designed and communicated

municated by God unto some of the Sons of
 Men: but telleth us *who they are*, to whom
 they are given. 1 *Joh. 3. 14. we know we have*
passed from Death to Life: A glorious Privi-
 ledge, to be translated from Death to Life:
 Ay, but the Holy Ghost there telleth us *who*
they are that are made partakers of it; 'tis
 they, and they only, in whose Hearts is *love unto*
the brethren. Union to Christ is a high and glo-
 rious Priviledge: and the Scripture telleth us
 not only that such a thing there is; but *who*
 they are that are made partakers of it, 1 *Joh.*
2. 5, 6. hereby we know that we are in him:
How? By keeping his Word, by keeping his
Commandments. There are some, the Scrip-
 ture telleth us, that *dwell in Christ, and Christ*
in them: but withal he telleth us *who they*
are, Joh. 6. 56. he that eateth my Flesh and
drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him;
 that is, he that believeth. It is a high and
 glorious Priviledge to be *elected*, to have God
 cull and single a Man out from all the rest of
 Mankind, designing him to Life and Glory.
 The Scripture doth not only tell us that there
 are a number who belong to the Election of
 Grace: but it telleth us *who they are*, giveth
 us marks of being elected, 1 *Thes. 1. 4, 5.*
knowing brethren beloved your election of God: How
 did they know it? *because saith he our Gospel*
came to you in Power, and in the Holy Ghost,
and in much Assurance. The Word tells us
 there are some *predestinated*, *Rom. 8. 30.* but
 who are they? He tells us this is a *mark* of
 one that is predestinated, he is one that is
 called, *whom he did Predestinate, them he also*
called. He telleth us there are some *ordained*

to *Eternal Life*: but withal the Word telleth us who these are. They are such as *believed*, Acts 13. 48. as many as were *ordained to Eternal Life believed*. It is a high and glorious Priviledge to have a Mans *name written in the Lambs book of Life*: The Scripture telleth us not only of such a thing; but how we may know them, who they are; they are such as *bear Christs Word, and believe on him*. John. 5. 24. such as come to him, chap. 6. 37. There are some that are the *Sheep of Christ*, for whom he layeth down his Life; *I lay down my Life for the Sheep*, Job. 10. 15. A glorious Priviledge this is, to be a redeemed ransomed one: Ay, but the Scripture withal telleth us who they are, *my Sheep bear my voice, and follow me*, ver. 27. It is a glorious Priviledge to be *free from Condemnation*: And the Scripture telleth us who enjoy it, they that are *in Christ, who walk not after the Flesh but after the Spirit*. Rom. 8. 1. So I might run through all the glorious Priviledges that belong unto them who have *Eternal Life*; and might shew you that it is the constant Course in the Word of God, not only to tell us of such Priviledges and Blessings; but likewise to *describe and Characterise* the Persons to whom they pertain: that a Man may as certainly know whether he has an interest in them, as he may know himself to fall under the *threatning* when he hath committed such and such a Sin.

3. The Word of God doth a further thing towards Assurance: It holds out unto us *full satisfying Security concerning the Truth and Performance of the Promises*. God doth this on

on purpose to meet with our unbelief, and to confute and silence it: For you will find this in your selves and your own Experience, that when you have been taking a view of the Greatness and Glory of the Priviledges of the beloved ones of God; yea when it may be, you have been searching into your own Hearts, and into the Word, and have attained some measure of Clearness that you are the Persons to whom the Word of Promise speaketh Peace; yet you will find oftentimes an aptness to a secret questioning the certain Truth and Performance of the Word. You know how it was with *Mary*, *Luke* 1. 28. &c. when the Angel came unto her and said *Hail thou that art highly favoured*, telling her of a very singular and extraordinary Priviledge which she should by Gods favour be made partaker of, *thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son, and he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Higbest, and sit upon the Throne of his Father David and he shall Reign over the House of Jacob for ever.* *Mary* at first began to stagger through unbelief, saying, *How shall this be?* She knew it was an *Angel*, a message from *God*: She knew that *she* her self was the Person spoken to; and yet she staggers, *how can these things be?* Even so it is with Believers as to their Assurance and Comfort. When the Word telleth them of *great things*; *Pardon of Sin*; *Peace* with *God*; *Enjoyment* of his *favour*: Being *preserved* and brought unto his heavenly Kingdom at last. saith the Soul, *how can these things be?* Tho' it cannot deny or doubt but it self is the Person to whom the Promises are made, it finds its name written

there, it self described there: yet it staggers, *how can these things be?* God to meet with our unbelief doth hold forth satisfying Assurance to us that the Word of Promise shall take place and be made good unto us abundantly. You know how it was with Sarah, Gen. 18. when the Angel said she should have a Child: she through unbelief said *within her self* how can this be, *after I am waxed old my Lord being old also?* It is so with Believers: they hear *great things* spoken of in the Word of God; and it may be they cannot doubt, dare not deny but that *themselves* are the Persons whom God speaketh of: I am meant in the Promise saith the Soul, I find my self described there; yet through the working of unbelief there is a staggering, *how can this be?*

This working of unbelief taketh occasion principally from three things.

1. *The astonishing greatness of the things spoken of by God.* The Priviledges, and Blessings, and Promises are so exceeding great, that unbelief staggers at them, stands amazed, and makes a great deal of questioning and doubting about them.

2. Unbelief taketh occasion too from the *Sight and Sence of a Mans own unworthiness and wileness.* I have been, saith the Soul such and such an one, have done such and such things against God, I am become so exceeding guilty; my ways have been very hateful to God: how can it be that I should be a Son, and Daughter of the living God, an Heir of Glory a Coheir with Christ?

3. Unbelief taketh occasion and advantage from the *difficulty and mighty opposition which lyeth*

in the way of the Performance of the Promise.
If there were not such Oppositions against it, the Soul thinks it could more easily take in with it and believe it: But there are Hosts of Temptations, Armies of Corruptions to be conflicted with; you must hold on to the End, or there's no attaining Eternal Life: And thou knowest thou hast a treacherous Heart within, a guileful World without, and powers of Darkness that will beset and environ thee round about; and therefore what Assurance canst thou have that Eternal Life is thine?

Now it hath pleased God by the security which the Word holdeth out concerning the Truth and accomplishment of the Promises, to give us precious relief against these various workings of Unbelief. And there are among others, *Four* things which are the chief of those ways of God wherein he giveth Believers security concerning the fulfilling of the Promises.

1. He doth discover and lay open to them the *Original and Fountain* from whence Eternal Life is given.

2. He doth likewise declare unto us the *way and means* of its being communicated and bestowed.

3. He telleth us what it is that is his *Supreme and chief End*, and must be upon his Heart in giving Eternal Life.

4. God teacheth us to look upon all that he hath already done for us in a way of effectual Grace, as a *Pledge and Earnest* of what he will yet farther do for us.

Every one of these contributes unto the

assuring of a Believer that the Promise shall be made good.

1. God telleth us what is the Original, and highest Spring from which Eternal Life is given. It is not any thing in the Creature: But it is the Counsel or Purpose or Love of God. So the Scripture every where declareth. It leadeth us thither, and referreth us thither, and doth fix and center our Hearts there. Fear not little Flock, for it is your Fathers good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom, Luke 12. 32. He doth not say, fear not, you shall work it out, you have deserved it: No, but it is your Fathers Pleasure: He leadeth them thither, leaveth them there: And so every where in Scripture, leading us to Gods good Pleasure, and Purposes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy Sight. Mat. 11. 26. The Apostle telleth us all is according to the Purpose of his Grace, according to the Counsel of his own Will. This is a mighty Confirmation unto Faith, that the Promise shall be performed: for Faith layeth all upon the immutability and constancy of God's Nature and Will. It layeth that in Pawn for it, God must change before his Word can Fail: and the reason of it is, his Word is nothing else but the opening of his Heart; the Promise of Eternal Life is nothing else but the discovery and unfolding of the purpose of his Heart; he telleth us in his Word of Promise what thoughts he hath had towards us in his own Breast from everlasting.

2. For our security that the Promise of Eternal Life shall be performed, God doth likewise in his Word give us an account of the Way and Means of the Promises being accomplished. This is direct.

directly to Answer that demand of Unbelief,
How can these Things be? God telleth you
How. And touching the *Way and Manner* of
the communicating of Eternal Life to us,
there are Four Things declared by God in his
Word.

(1.) That it is by the *Mediation of Christ*.
He interposeth with God about it, it is *He*
that removeth all the Obstructions which the
Holiness and Justice of God may seem to op-
pose against our having Eternal Life. The
Mediation of Christ lieth in his *Obedience*, and
in his *Intercession*. By the *Obedience* of Christ
it becometh a *just and righteous* Thing with
God to give Eternal Life to Sinners that fly
to Christ, and *believe in him*, Rom. 3. 26.
2 Thess. 1. 6, 7. The *Justice* of God is engaged
by the *Obedience* of Christ: It is not only
satisfied, so that there is nothing against our
having Eternal Life; but it is *engaged and ob-*
liged, so as that Justice it self pleaderh for it;
and hence, the Justice of God is as it were
laid to pawn for our Security. A Believer
therefore in his expecting Eternal Life, tho'
as to *himself* he must look to meer Mercy and
sovereign Grace; yet with respect unto *Christ*,
and *his* dealings with God, a Believer may
take hold on the very *Justice* of God: For
look as Christ in his *Obedience* dealt with
God's Justice, and won over *that*, even for
Eternal Life to be given to the Elect; so a
Believer, looking unto the performance of Je-
sus Christ, the *Obedience* which he hath paid,
and the *Righteousness* he hath wrought out,
may and should take hold on the very *Justice*
of God, and strengthen his Faith in the Pro-
mise

mise of Eternal Life upon this very Consideration, *He is a Just and a Righteous God*, with whom I have to do through the Mediator. Moreover Christ in his *Intercession* prosecuteth and pursueth the Thing which by his Obedience he did deserve. The Apostle therefore in that Triumph of Faith, *Rom. 8.* laieth the *Intercession* of Christ at the bottom, *ver. 34.* Christ in his Intercession dealeth with Gods Justice, as well as in his Obedience; he doth not supplicate for Grace and Mercy in that humble and abased way, which he did in the Days of his Flesh, but now in his Intercession appeareth before God in a stately and glorious Manner, as *Jesus Christ the Righteous*, 1 John 2. 1. And thence he is represented as a Lamb standing in the midst of the Throne, as it had been slain. *He entered into the Holy Place*, and he appears there: How? *With his own Blood*, in the Vertue, and Voice, and Claim of *that*. And in that Pattern of the Intercession of Christ, *John 17.* We have Christ claiming and challenging even from Justice, Eternal Life for his People; *I will*, saith he, *ver. 24.* *That they whom thou hast given me be with me*: He doth not say, *I pray, I entreat, or beg*; but *I will*: An Expression implying, that Christ had a Claim to it, a right to demand it. And thence in the next Verse, he saith, *O Righteous Father*, he taketh hold on the *Righteousness* of God his Father. And this is a mighty strengthening to a Believers Assurance, when he can by Faith see that the very *Righteousness* and *Justice* of God is engaged and laid hold on, yea laid down to pawn for his Security, that he shall have Eternal Life.

(2.) As

(2.) As to the Way, and Means, and Manner, how Eternal Life is conveyed, God declareth in the Word *that it is by Covenant, by a Covenant of Promise and Free-Grace.* Grace founded it, and Grace ruleth in it all along. And that Covenant is *double.* It was first made with *Christ* as the Head of the Elect; You read of a Promise of Eternal Life made before the World began, *Tit. 1. 2. Isa. 49. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.* But that is not all, it was not only a Promise to *Christ*; but the Scripture telleth us also of a Promise to *us*, a Covenant to *us*, to us as in *Christ*. 'Tis first made with *him*, but it is also made with *us*: *I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, Isa. 55. 3. 2 Sam. 23. 5.* So that I call it a double Covenant, because all the Promises of it are first made to *Christ*, and then they are made to *us* as in *Christ*. Now by Vertue of this *Covenant*, which is a Covenant of Free-Grace, the faithfulness and veracity of God is engaged and laid to pawn for a Believers Security, concerning the Certainty of the Promise of Eternal Life: The Promise cannot fail but God must be untrue; and *it is impossible for God to Lie*: God hath sealed this Covenant by a Promise of his own, and *confirmed it by his Oath, Heb. 6. 17, 18.*

(3.) As to the Way of Conveyance of Eternal Life, the Scripture telleth us, *it is by Faith, and not of Works.* I say by *Faith*, which Faith is a receiving of *Christ*, and the Promise of Life in *Jesus Christ*. This is a great Security to a Believers Heart, concerning the Certainty of the Promise: For if it were of Works, who is there that would not, that must

must not despair of it. No, but it is of Faith, that it might be sure to all the Seed, Rom. 4. 26.

(4.) As to the Way of its accomplishing, The Promise is performed, and the Blessing brought about, not by any Ability or Strength of our own: but by the Power and Omnipotency of God. The Care of it is laid upon Christ, and God himself hath undertaken for the Performance of it: Thence we are said to be kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation, to an Inheritance incorruptible, 1 Pet. 1. 4, 5. All these Things about the Way and Means of the accomplishing the Promise, do make up a very full and satisfying Security unto a Believer, when they are taken in and realized by Faith.

3. God doth farther for our Security reveal unto us what is his highest and supream End, and therefore must lie upon his Heart, in giving us Eternal Life. And concerning this, God telleth us, it is not only Love to us, that we might be blessed; but he telleth us, he had a farther Aim and End in it, even his Son's Glory, that the Crown might flourish upon the Head of Christ to his Praise and Glory. And he designed also to get unto Himself Glory, and an Everlasting Name and Praise; that his saving of us should be to Him, Matter of Honour and Praise, and that throughout all Eternity. And this likewise is a mighty Security and Support unto a Believers Faith: For though as to himself he hath a Thousand Objections against it, yet this being once in the Eye of his Faith, and his Faith being fixed and fastned on it, that he can say God hath
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a design, and had it upon his Heart from Everlasting, to get *himself* a glorious Name in doing good to *me*, and saving this poor polluted guilty Soul of *mine*: It causeth a Believer to rest, and be at a holy sweet Security in his own Heart. So that by the Security which God holdeth out to us in his Word touching the performance of his Promise, a Believer when he cometh to take a view of it, may find himself compassed round with such full over-pow'ring Satisfaction concerning God's fulfilling his Promise, and making it good unto him, as that unbelief it self must be put to silence, and have no more to say, seeing God will have it so: For being brought about in such a *Way*, and God having such a *Design* therein; I will (saith the Soul) *be no more faithless, but believing*; I will endeavour to maintain a Holy Security in my own Heart about Eternal Life.

4. God doth this farther for our Satisfaction and Security: *He teacheth us to look upon all that he hath done for us already* (I speak of his *saving* Work, all that he hath wrought in us in a way of *Effectual Grace*, he teacheth us to look upon all these Things) *as Pledges and Earnests of what he will yet farther do.* All the workings of Grace in the Hearts of Believers are *Eternal Life begun*, they are the breakings in of Life, of that Life which in the Design and Promise of God is *Eternal*. The Principle of Grace in the Heart, is therefore called by Christ a *Well of Water springing up into Everlasting Life*, John 4. 14. And God's working on us in a way of Heart-changing Power and Grace, is called a working of us for *Glo-*
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ry, 2 Cor. 4. 16, 17, 18. and Chap. 5. 5. and it is called a *making us meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, Col. 1. 12. *A preparing us for Glory*, Rom. 9. 23. Yea, hence it is, that the Work of God's Grace upon us, is called a *Sealing us to the Day of Redemption*, Eph. 4. 30. *a sealing us by the Spirit of Promise*; unto what? *unto the receiving of the purchased Possession*, Eph. 1. 13, 14. God teacheth Believers to look upon all that he worketh on them in a way of sovereign and saving Grace, as a Pawn and Pledge that he will give Eternal Life to them. This God doth for the Satisfaction of their Hearts, and the strengthening their Faith, concerning the Promise of Eternal Life.

S E R M O N XXII.

I J O H N V. 13.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life; and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

THe Observation raised and handled from these Words has been,

That

That *Assurance of Eternal Life is through the Word of God. Or, God's written Word is a means of Assurance.*

That which now remaineth is some *Application*.

I. By way of *Information and Instruction.*

II. By way of *Correction.*

III. By way of *Exhortation and Direction.*

I. By way of *Information.* Here you may see that the *Assurance of Believers* concerning their having *Eternal Life is an Assent and Assurance of Faith.* It is built and bottomed on the *Word* and *Testimony* of *God*, it is by that they come to be assured, it is therefore an *Assurance of Faith*: For it is an *Assent and Consent* of the *Heart* of a *Believer* with the *Word*. Sometimes indeed it is more full and strong, sometimes more weak and feeble unto the *Testimony* of *God* in his *Word*: But an assent given unto the *Divine Testimony*, as such, is an act of *Faith*.

The *Papists* generally quarrel with us, and deny that a *Believer* can have an *Assurance of Faith* concerning his own *Salvation*. And some others lay *Stumbling-Blocks* in their way, and deny or question whether there be any such thing as *Faith* or *Assurance* concerning a *Man's* own *eternal Salvation*? There are *Three* things which contain the main of the strength of what they alledge against a *Believer's Assurance* being an *Assurance of Faith*. I will briefly touch upon them to remove them out of the way, and pass on.

1. Say they, *It is no where said particularly in the Word, That thou, such, or such an one, either hast, or shalt have Life Eternal.*

Answer. It is true, 'Tis no were said of such an one by Name in particular; but it is as true, That *Generals includes Particulars*; and that an Assent of Faith concerning a particular, is justly founded upon a Promise that runneth more generally. It is in this Case as it is with the *Injunctions and Commands* of God. God no where saith to any one in particular, and by Name, *thou shalt believe, and thou shalt not sin*; But yet God having declared in the general, what is his Mind and Will concerning our Duty, every ones Conscience ought to apply it, and subscribe to it for himself, and say, It is the Will of God concerning *me*, that I should believe, that I should do so and so. So it is as to the Word of Promise, with reference to Assurance. God no where promiseth to any *particular person by Name*, that he shall have Eternal Life; but God promiseth it to *Believers*, and telleth us *who are Believers*. Hereupon, every true Believer's Conscience ought to subscribe, and give an Assent of Faith unto it, *I am the Soul that is meant in this Promise*. As in the Curse and Commination of the *Law*, God doth not say of this or that *particular* Man, that he is under Condemnation; but he saith it of *all Sinners in general*, all the Children of *Adam* universally that are out of Christ. And thence every ones Conscience ought to take it up, and bring it home to himself, and fall under a believing Conviction and Acknowledgment of Sin and Guilt. As it is in Predictions and Promises of the *Resurrection of the Body*: God no where saith it by Name of any Man in Particular, but saith it of *all*, that they must appear at the Judgment

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Seat of Christ, and shall all be raised again at the coming of the Lord. Now this general and comprehensive Word ought to be taken up, and believed by every particular Person concerning himself; every one ought to give an Assent of Faith where he hath a Word for it; this Body of mine, though it be laid down in the Dust and moulder away; yet this Body of mine shall be raised up again. Even so it is, as to the Promise of Eternal Life: There is a *General* which includes *Particulars*; and it is the Work of Faith, not only to give an Assent in general unto the Promise, but to give it with a *particular Application* and Assurance to a Mans self.

2. It is *Objected*, That Assurance is an Act of Experience, or Knowledge, and therefore cannot be an Act of Faith; an Act of spiritual Sense, say some, and therefore cannot be an Act of Faith.

Answer. Experience, Knowledge, and spiritual Sense, may concur jointly to give an Assurance of Faith, concerning the same Conclusion. The Conclusion resulteth and groweth up partly from Knowledge and Experience, that is true: But yet the Assent that is given to that Conclusion, may be an Assent of Faith nevertheless. The Holy Ghost therefore useth both Words concerning Assurance, 1 John 4. 16. *We have known*, there is Knowledge; and *we have believed the Love of God*, there is Faith. Knowledge and Faith may concur jointly in the Assent that is given to the same Conclusion: A Man may both know it, and believe it; he may know it in the Principle, and Cause of it, or in the Experience

and feeling of it; and he may *believe* it, having a Testimony from the Word of God concerning it. So then, Faith and Knowledge may concur in *Assurance*: Therefore it is a mistake to think, that because there is *Knowledge*, and a Believer *knows* what is wrought in him; because there is *Sense* and *Experience*, and he *feeleth* what is done in his Heart by God; therefore there cannot be any acting of *Faith*.

3. There is an *Objection* raised from a *Logical Rule*, That in *Syllogistical Reasonings* the *Conclusion* follows the Nature of the *weaker Proposition*. Now say they, the *weaker Proposition* in the Syllogism of *Assurance* is a Proposition of *Sense* and *Experience*, and not of *Faith*; and therefore the *Conclusion* must be *such*.

I should not have mentioned such an *Objection*, I am ashamed to do it; but that some of great Name have made a noise about it. But the Answer is plain and easie, the Rule is only a *Logical Rule*, and thence holdeth true only in *Logical Reasonings*; but it is no Rule, no Principle in *Divinity*. Thence in Things *Divine* and *Spiritual* it is a palpable Fallacy and Weakness, as is plain: For *Instances* might be given, wherein *one Proposition* in a Syllogism is a Proposition of *Sense*, and the *other* of *Faith*; and yet the *Conclusion* is a Conclusion of *Faith*. *John 15. 24.* Christ saith, *If I had not done the Works which no other Man did, they would have been excused from believing; but that Christ did such Works, was a thing evident to Sense; they saw and heard, were Eye and Ear-witnesses of what he did.* Take another

ther Instance; *He that hath a humane Soul and Body is properly and truly a Man*: This is a Proposition of Reason, of natural Reason. But *Christ had a humane Soul and a humane Body*: This is a Proposition of Divine Revelation, and to be received by Faith. Therefore *Christ was properly and truly a Man*; this Conclusion is a Conclusion of Faith. And innumerable Instances might be given of the like kind. It is therefore a weak and fallacious reasoning, that the Assent of Assurance cannot be an Assent of Faith, because one Proposition in the Syllogism of Assurance is the Object of spiritual Sense and Experience, or feeling in a Mans self.

To conclude therefore, Hold fast the good old Protestant Doctrine, that there is a Faith of Adherence, and there is a Faith of Assurance. The Faith of Adherence is in every Believer, the Faith of Assurance may be attained, and should be pressed after by every Believer. There is danger in letting go this Doctrine, it tendeth secretly to harden Believers in their unbelief and want of Assurance, or at least in their weakness therein: For if it be not an Act of Faith to be assured that a Man hath Eternal Life, no Believers Conscience ought to charge him with the workings of unbelief in his doubting and staggering about it. Take heed therefore of entertaining such a Thought, it tendeth I say to harden you in your unbelief and want of Assurance; it tendeth to make you apprehend Assurance to be only a Privilege, and not a Duty; or only a piece of your happiness, but nothing that is bound upon your Consciences, either to attain or press after.

II. *By way of Correction.* This Point may check, and should reduce us from that mistaken and erroneous Practice which *some* are guilty of, and *all* of us are subject to; namely, to look for Assurance by an immediate Testimony of the Holy Ghost, not in and by the Word, but in a way of secret whisper, or powerful strong Impression and speaking into the Heart. It is I say a mistaken erroneous Practice to neglect and overlook the Word of God as the means of Assurance, and to long after such immediate Suggestions and speakings into the Heart by Injections and whispers of the Holy Ghost.

1. I will not call into Question what the Holy Ghost *may* do when he pleaseth, nor what he *hath* done unto some in some exigencies or eminent Cases: So God from Heaven once called to *Abraham*, and said, *now I know thou fearest God*: But you never read that he did it to any before, or since. And therefore, though the Holy Ghost *may* do it, having not limited or tied up himself, he may speak into a Mans Heart, and tell him *that he hath Eternal Life*. This may possibly be, though it is not *promised*; however this we know, that God is abundant in Mercy and Goodness, and doth sometimes in particular Cases, beyond what he hath promised to do in the General.

2. Whatever the Holy Spirit *may* do, having not limited or tied up himself, *It is an evil Frame of Heart in any Believer, to overlook the ordinary Means of Assurance, and neglect the Word of God, and the Witness of God in his Word; so as to look after such immediate whispers and speakings by the Spirit in the Heart.* It is true, we are said to be sealed with the Holy Spirit

rit of Promise, which is the earnest of our Inheritance, until the purchased Possession, Eph. 1. 13, 14. Sealed to the Day of Redemption, Eph. 4. 30. We are said to be sealed by God, 2 Cor. 1. 22. But sealing doth not signifie any such immediate Suggestions and Sayings by the Holy Ghost, thou hast Eternal Life; but it is a Metaphor taken from the common usage among Men, who when they bought Slaves used to set a Mark upon them. The sealing of the Holy Ghost is such a conforming and sanctifying Impression made upon the Soul of a Believer after his believing, as is in its own Nature an Evidence that the Believer belongeth to God; and thence it is an Indication and Argument that the Lord hath ascertained him to be his own, to be his Jewel, whom he will make up among the rest of his Jewels in the great Day. Sealing is not a sealing up of the Promise in a Mans Heart, or a Mans own Interest in it; 'tis not the Promise that is the Object of the Seal; but it is the Person, who is the Subject of the Seal. And so it is an Expression taken from the Nature and Use of Seals and Marks set upon Cattel or Goods, whereby they are ascertained to belong to such and such, and may be known so to belong, by themselves or by others.

It is true also, that the Holy Ghost is said to witness to, or with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God, Rom. 8. 16. But,

1. Let it be considered, that that Word [Witness] is sometimes used in Scripture in somewhat a Tralatitious Sense. And so, the Works of Christ witnessed, or proved his being the Messiah, John 10. 25, 37, 38. And the

Holy Ghost bore Witness to the Apostles by Signs, and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts, which he bestowed upon them, and wrought in them according to his own Will, Heb. 2. 4. Witnessing, therefore in Scripture usage, sometimes signifies *arguing* or *proving*, convictively and demonstratively proving and arguing such a thing to be so and so. In this Sense those Words before quoted, Rom. 8. 16. may be understood, that the Holy Spirit doth witness to or with our Spirits; that is, the Holy Ghost working in our Hearts, as a Spirit of Adoption and Prayer, crying in our Hearts *Abba Father*, is a Demonstration and Proof that we are the Children of God, Gal. 4. 6. And the Words will well admit of that Sense. That same Spirit working in such a way in us, as a Spirit of Adoption, witnesseth to us, that we are the Children of God; his so working in or with us is a proving, arguing, and evidencing that we are Gods Children.

2. Taking *Witnessing* in a proper Sense, for a declaring or asserting of such a Truth upon the Credit of him that doth affirm it; Then let it be farther Noted, that there is even such a Witness which is not immediate; but is in and by the Word. What the Word speaketh, God speaketh; what the Word saith, the Holy Ghost saith. So if the Scripture saith, *thou art a Child of God*, the Holy Ghost saith so too; whether you take it in or no, and give an Assent unto it or no: For what the Scripture declareth, the Holy Ghost witnesseth to; seeing He indited the Scripture, and the Holy Penmen thereof spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,

Ghost, 2 Pet. 1. 21. Now therefore when it is said, the *Holy Ghost witnesseth* to our Consciences, that we are *God's Children*; the meaning is, the Holy Ghost doth it from *Scripture*, in the *Word of Promise*: But it cannot thence be inferred, that the Holy Ghost doth it by an *immediate Suggestion or Whisper* in the Heart. But as I said even now, what the Holy Ghost may do, (not having limited himself) that is not called in question; but what is his *ordinary way*. And then what is the *Duty* of Christians, what is the way for them? Which must certainly be according as God hath prescribed in the *Word of Promise*: It is *there* we are to look for the Power of the Holy Ghost, to fill us with all joy and peace in believing, as the Apostle speaks, *Rom. 15. 13.*

3. We will grant an *immediate Influence of Power from the Holy Ghost, in the business of Assurance.* I say an *immediate Influence of Power*, beyond the Power of the Means, or the Word taken by it self; *enlightning the Mind*, helping the Believer to give a strong *Assent of Faith* unto the Promise, leading a Believer down into his own *Bosome*, enabling him to see what God hath done *there*, what Token of Love is there. Yea, I will grant an *immediate Influence of Power* upon a Believer's Heart in the Business of Assurance, *holding his Thoughts upon the Conclusion*, in the Syllogism of Assurance, setting it before his Eyes, engraving it there, helping him to say, *I am a Child of God, my Sins are pardoned, I am an Heir of Eternal Life.* Yea, I grant an *immediate Power and Influence* from the Holy Ghost touching the Heart, reaching the *Affections*, letting in the Taste of the Sweet-

ness and ravishing Preciousness of those Privileges which a Believer is invested in. But all this will not amount unto an *immediate Suggestion*, and speaking of the Holy Ghost, *without, or beside the Word*, that a Man is a Child of God. And this bringeth me to the next Use.

III. *By way of Exhortation and Direction.*

It sheweth you whereto you must apply, what means you must use, what you must attend unto, if you would know that you have Eternal Life. To the Law and to the Testimony, or Word of God. Be conversant in that, look into that, find your Assurance there, get it thence. This is given you by God as his Ordinance for that thing: The written Word is given you by God as his Ordinance, for your Assurance that ye have Eternal Life. To the written Word therefore; apply your selves unto that. But how shall a Believer apply himself unto, and be exercised in the Word of God in order to Assurance? A few Directions about it.

1. *Get acquaintance with the Word, get light in it. Search the Scriptures, John 5. 39. Be sure you discern, and mistake not the Mind and Meaning of the Holy Ghost in the Word. To run away with a word, without a right understanding of the meaning of God in that word, may be a Presumption, a Delusion, but it can never be a just ground of Assurance. Yea, tho' possibly that word may be true concerning you; yet if you discern not the just and full meaning of God in that Word, your Assurance will be weakly built, it will totter and shake, and perhaps fall, when Storms arise; tho' it may be thy Soul may be saved. I say therefore, Get light in the Word, get acquaintance*

ance with it: I mean, grow into a familiarity with the Word, be much conversant with it. Treasure up the *Promises*; for *they* especially are the means of our Comfort and Assurance; treasure them up in your Minds and Memories. Some private Saints of God have gathered them from the Word; there is a Book printed, done by one of the Female Sex, to that purpose; Promises gathered together for her own Use, Assurance, and Comfort.

2. *Take whatever is spoken in the Word for your Comfort, as spoken from God*: For it is God who speaketh in the Word; and what the Word speaketh, God himself speaketh. And it is a strange Miscarriage which is found in some Believer's Hearts, they would tremble to reject what God speaketh, and yet make no difficulty or scruple of putting off what the Word speaketh. You should take it as spoken by God; the Word of God is established in Heaven, it endureth for ever, standeth sure to Eternity; the Judgment is past upon Souls according to the Word. Therefore, what the Word speaketh, you should take it as spoken from God; it is as sure, as good, as just a ground of Faith, as if there was a Voice from Heaven, a Voice of Thunder which all the Earth should hear. We have, saith the Apostle Peter, 2 Epist. 1. 19, 20. *a more sure Word of Prophecie, whereunto ye do well to take heed, until the Day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your Hearts.* A more sure Word of Prophecie; a comparative Expression: The thing he referreth to, is the Voice which he heard in the Mount, which said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* But we have a more sure Word of Prophecie than that,

that, a more sure Word than a Voice from the excellent Glory, if ye had been present at Christ's Transfiguration. And this more sure Word of Propheſie all Believers ſhould take heed unto, as in all other things, ſo in this of Conſolation and Assurance: And this you muſt continue and hold on in, until the Day dawn, and the Day-ſtar ariſe in your Hearts; that is, until the Night of this Life be paſt, and the Day of Eternal Glory dawn, and the Day-ſtar of Heaven ariſe upon your Hearts. So that this is the Duty of Believers, to attend unto the more ſure Word of Propheſie, and that with ſuch Awe, and Reverence, and Faith, as is its due; to receive it as the Teſtimony of God; and therefore to make Conſcience of being ſealed by it. It may be, ye have had ſince your Conversion, ſome Reflection, with aſtoniſhment, upon the hardneſs of your Hearts, in the Days of your Unbelief; how ye could read, and hear ſuch things out of God's Word as ye then heard, and not have your Hearts ſmitten with ſuitable Impreſſions: O be not guilty of the like Evil now, in putting off the Word of Promise and Conſolation, as if it were not the Voice of the everlaſting God.

3. Look upon the Word of Promise and Comfort, not only as the Word of God, but alſo as a diſcovery and opening the very Heart of God concerning you. This would make it comfortable and ſweet indeed, as it is the diſcovery and opening of the very Heart of God. Truly Brethren, ſo the Promiſes are, they are Openings of the very Heart of God, they are Diſplays of his Love, Discoveries of his Thoughts, Reſolutions, and Purpoſes; of his immutable Love, his

his *unchangeable* Purposes : And therefore so they should be received by us. If it had not been in the *Heart* of God to give Eternal Life to a Believer, it had never come out of his Mouth ; he had never *spoken* such Words of Promise as he hath filled the Scriptures with. The Apostle leadeth us therefore by the *Promises* of God, unto the Immutability of the *Counsel* of God, the Unchangeableness of the *Purpose* of his *Heart*, Heb. 6. 17, 18. God willing more abundantly to shew unto the *Heirs* of Promise, the Immutability of his *Counsel*, confirmed it by an *Oath* ; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong *Consolation*. It is impossible for God to lie in either of these things, either the Word of *Promise*, or the *Counsel* of his *Will* : It is impossible for him to lie, or alter in these, or indeed in any thing : *With him is no variableness, nor so much as the shadow of turning*, James 1. 17. *I know the thoughts which I think towards you, saith the Lord*, by the Prophet, Jer. 29. 11. God by his Promises of Mercy leadeth them into his *Heart* ; layeth open his Bosom-Thoughts and Purposes : So you should say concerning every *Promise* of Eternal Life, this sheweth me the Thoughts that God thinketh towards me ; yea, the Thoughts which he hath thought from all Eternity, and the Thoughts and Counsels that he will think to all Eternity concerning me. There are secret sinful Jealousies and Unbeliefs in our Hearts, concerning the Purposes and Heart of God ; we should therefore receive and close with the Promises, not only as God's *Word*, but as God's *Word* which speaketh his *Heart* : They all come from
a Heart

a Heart full of Thoughts of Grace, and Purposes of Love unto those to whom they are made.

4. *Especially make use of those Promises that lie fairest, that lie nearest.* It may be there are some Promises which thy Conscience cannot apply to thy self, and get Assurance by: But there are other Promises which speak comfortably, even unto thee. Now you should be content thankfully to receive Assurance and Comfort by the *lowest* Promises: If you have it, you have it from God, and from God by his Word. Tho' it be not upon such high and honourable Terms as a proud Heart of Unbelief would have it; yet if it be in a way of Promise, you should receive it in a way of Thankfulness and Adoration. I will shew you in an instance or two, what I mean, *Mat. 5.8.* there is a Promise, *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God:* Aye, but thou seest such a Sink of Sin, Folly, and Wickedness in thy Heart, as that thou canst not take Assurance and Comfort from that Promise. Well, be it so, let it pass that so it is, thou canst get no Comfort from that Promise: Ay, but look to *ver. 3, 4, 6.* *Blessed are the poor in Spirit: Blessed are they that mourn: Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after Righteousness.* Canst thou not read thy Name in some of these? Art thou not one of the *poor in Spirit*? Dost thou not lie under a Sense of thy *unworthiness*? Dost thou not *mourn* for what thou hast done against God, for what thou art before him? Dost thou not *hunger and thirst* after Righteousness? That Promise speaketh unto thy Comfort as well as if it had been spoken to thee

by Name : fasten upon that good and comfortable word, make use of it, apply it to thy self for thy Assurance : Assurance and Blessedness belongeth unto thee, as well as to those that can see the purity of their own Hearts. There is a Promise, *Rev. 3. 12. To him that overcometh.* It may be you can make nothing of that Promise for your Comfort : Alas ! you have not overcome, you find your selves assaulted, engaged in a Spiritual Warfare, lamentably wounded ; yea, oftentimes worsted in the Conflict in which you have engaged ; you are no Overcomer, that Promise therefore to those that overcome, thou canst make nothing of, for thy Comfort. Aye, but there are other Promises in the Book of God, unto those that are engaged in a Spiritual Warfare, that are managing a holy Conflict against Sin and Satan : Tho' thou canst not say thou art a Conqueror, yet if thou canst say, I am become a Soldier of Christ, my Name is listed under his Banner, my Heart is engaged against Sin, and every thing that is hateful unto him ; there are many other Promises that speak Peace and Assurance to thee. It is true, some eminent Saints who have had one Foot upon the Land of Glory, have been able to cry out, and sing with the Apostle, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown, &c. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.* Or as he doth, *Rom. 8. 37.* looking back upon his Conflict, he triumphantly crieth out : *Nay, in all these things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us.* But tho' this is commonly the Attainment of some eminent Saints near to Glory : And the ordinary

Case

Case of Saints engaged in the Battel, and encompassed about with Enemies, is not to say they are Conquerors, and have their Feet upon the Necks of their Enemies : Yet even *these* can, and do see a *sufficiency* for them in the *Grace of Christ*, they have their dependance upon *him*, are going out to *him*, and living upon *him*. Therefore I say, take hold of that Promise which lies fairest for you ; tho' there are *some* out of your reach, yet there are *others* that are within the reach of thy Hand, and suited to thy Attainments.

§. If God ever speak Peace, and give thee any Assurance and Comfort in a Word of Promise, look upon it as thy Duty and Interest to receive it, to retain it, and to increase and grow in it. Look upon it as thy Duty and Interest to receive it. There is such a Sin in the Heart of Believers sometimes, that they refuse to be comforted, *Psal. 77. 2. My Soul refused to be comforted* : But believe it, God will convince you of it, humble you for it, make it an abasing, and Heart-wounding thing unto you, that you refuse to be comforted ; as well as he hath humbled you, that you have sometimes refused to be convinced : As the *Psalmist* saith, *ver. 10. This was my Infirmity* : So God will make you see it is your Duty and Interest to receive Comfort, and not put it away when God giveth it, when he speaketh it by any Word of Promise. And as you should receive it, so it is your Duty and Interest to retain it. What the Apostle speaketh of their Profession, *Heb. 3. 6. 14. let me apply to you, you should hold fast the beginning of your Confidence firm unto the end*. Or as the Spouse saith of her Beloved, as to close Communion

munion with him, *I held him, and would not let him go*, Cant. 3. 4. So should you retain, and hold this Comfort and Assurance, and not let it go; as the Apostle saith, *Have you forgot the Exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto Children*: So have you forgotten the Promise that spoke Comfort, and Peace, and Assurance to your Souls? O forget it not: As David saith, *I will never forget thy Precepts*, Psal. 119. 93. So should you say concerning any Promise of Assurance and Comfort, *I will never forget it*: He hath spoken Peace, and sprinkled the Blood of Christ upon my Conscience by such a word; I hope I shall never forget it. And as you should never forget, but retain this Peace and Comfort; so you should grow and increase in it. Assurance and Comfort is indeed an Attainment, but it is such an one as admitteth of Degrees; it is not as Justification, and Adoption; a weak Believer is as much justified, as much a Child of God, as the strongest Believer under Heaven: But Assurance, tho' it be a Priviledge, yet it is a Duty too, and such an one as hath Measures and Degrees: One Believer is more full of Assurance and Comfort than another. *The full Assurance of Hope*, Heb. 6. 11. which the Apostle doth wish, That all the *Hebrews* might give the same diligence for the attaining of, is not the enjoyment of every one. The Assurance of Faith, or the Faith of Assurance (for I take them for the same in this Case) there are two things required unto the fulness of it.

1. That it take in fully the Object of Assurance in the extent and latitude of it.

The

The thing which a Believer may, and should be assured of, is not only his present Comfort, much less *some part of it only*: That *such or such* a Sin is pardoned; nay, that *all* his Sins are pardoned: But his Assurance should rise higher, and work at a larger rate: He should be assured of a precious and full Acceptance before God in Christ; and be able to say, I am a *Member of Christ*, a *Child of God*, a *Son or Daughter of the Lord God Almighty*; I am *now* an Heir of God, a Co-heir with Christ; yea, a Believer in his Reflection, in order to Assurance, should look *back* unto Eternity: I was in the Heart and Thoughts of God, before all Worlds; yea, he should look forward to Eternity to come: *It doth not yet appear what I shall be: But I know, that when he shall appear, I shall be like him; for I shall see him as he is,* 1 John 3. 2.

2. There must be a full acting of Faith, on this full and extensive Object. When the Assent which the Soul giveth unto what God hath spoken and revealed, is constant, firm, strong, unshaken, unmovable; then is Consolation strong, and Assurance full. To have such Thoughts, such sweet Thoughts, bedewing the Heart *now and then*; is well: Ay, but you should walk in the Light of the Countenance of God; you should press after such a Constancy of Assurance, as that those Thoughts may be your daily Food, your Meat and Drink every Day. As when a Believer is in Dejectedness, his Tears are his Meat Day and Night: So when a Believer's Assurance is full, the Comforts of God delight his Soul every Day. Your Assent should be firm and constant, not up and down, not by

Fits;

Fits; you should endeavour that there may be no Clouds arising in your Minds, no Doubts darkning your Consciences, concerning your Interest in Eternal Life. You have not attained *full Assurance of Hope*, until you arise unto *this*: But when you have the *least* degree of Assurance and Comfort, *this* is that you should have in your Eye, and you should be pressing forwards to *this Mark*. For this is that unto which you are called of God in Christ Jesus.

S E R M O N XXIII.

I. JOHN 3, 19, 21.

And hereby we know that we are of the Truth, and shall assure our Hearts before him.

For if our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things.

Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.

YOU have heard there are *Four Things*, from which *Assurance* and *Comfort* grow up in a Believer's Heart:

1. *A Work of Heart-changing Grace wrought in him.*

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2. A

2. *A Word of Promise, speaking Peace to him in whom there is such a Work of Heart-changing Grace.*

3. *The Reflections and Actings of a Man's own Conscience.*

4. *The Assistance and Influence of the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of Adoption and Comfort.*

I have gone through the two First of these; and am now come to make some Entrance upon the Third: Namely,

The Interest and Influence which a Believer's Conscience hath into Assurance. And for this end I have chosen this Text.

The Words come in as a *Motive* unto Christians, perswading them to love one another not in word only, but in Deed, and in Truth, ver.

18. A Motive drawn from the advantage and benefit they might reap thereby. Hereby, saith

the Apostle, *We know that we are of the Truth, i.e. we know our State is good.* And they did

not only know it for the present; but he addeth, *and we shall assure our Hearts before God.*

There is much of Weight and Emphasis in those Words which he addeth: Some Believers have some Glimmerings of Hope some-

times, it may be said of them, that at some Seasons they know that they are of the Truth;

but this abideth not with them, their Hearts are not settled in this good Perswasion: Therefore

the Apostle addeth to their knowing, that they shall assure their Hearts before God. Yea,

some there are who have comfortable hope that they are of the Truth; but when God draw-

eth nigh unto them in Affliction or Judgment,

or in any more awful Appearance; or when they draw nigh unto God, and get realizing Sights of God, their Hopes vanish and die away: Therefore the Apostle addeth with an Emphasis, *We shall assure our Hearts* before him. And it is a great matter for a Believer to stand before the Face, and solemn Presence of God, and have real Sights of him, and under those Sights have his Heart perswaded that he is of the Truth. Now, that they might see this was a great matter, and a precious Attainment, the Apostle illustrates it two ways:

1. By the sadness of the contrary Case. *If our Hearts condemn us, God is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all things*: And that is a sad Case indeed, to be under *Self-condemnings* from a Man's own Heart, and Condemnation from God too: A Man's own Heart in this Case, is one of his greatest Friends, or one of his greatest Foes: But when a Man shall have those *Self-condemnings* from his own Heart accompanied with Condemnings likewise from God, who is greater than his Heart, and knoweth all things, how dreadful is that Soul's Condition? And yet it is the Condition of many: But if it be so sad to have a Man's own Heart condemn him, it is then a very precious and choice Attainment, to know we are of the Truth, and to have our Hearts assured before God.

2. The Apostle illustrates the Excellency and Preciousness of this Priviledge from the Effect of it, ver. 21. *If our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God*, [Confidence towards God,] the Word properly signifies a freedom or liberty of Speech; when we

can go to God with all our Desires, Complaints, and Ails, and have not only a *Right* and Liberty so to do, but have our Hearts *framed* and instructed by the Spirit of Adoption to do so. This is that *Confidence towards God*, which the Apostle here speaketh of. The Holy Ghost elsewhere exaggerates it, and calls it *Boldness*, and *Access with Confidence*, through the Faith of Christ, Eph. 3. 12. It implies a liberty, and a frame of Heart, for dealing in a close Familiarity with the most High, even as a Child with his Father; a Child hath sweet Perswasions reigning in his Heart, of his Father's Love to him.

By *Heart* the Apostle here meaneth *Conscience*. If our Hearts condemn us, and if our Hearts condemn us not; that is, if our own Consciences do it, or do it not. The Hebrew Language has no Word so properly signifying Conscience as this: And the Apostle writeth this Epistle unto those who were by Nature Jews; therefore his Language and Stile is much after the Hebrew Tongue; many Evidences of it might be given: In imitation of that Language, he here calleth the Conscience by the name of *Heart*, 1 Kings 2. 44. *Thou knowest the Wickedness which thine Heart is privy to*, saith Solomon to Shimei; i. e. the Wickedness which his Conscience was privy to, Prov. 15. 15. *A merry Heart is a continual Feast*: So we read it, in the Hebrew it is a good Heart; the old Geneva Translation renders it a good Heart; and it is a better rendering than ours: *A good Conscience is a continual Feast*; that is the meaning of it. Sometimes the Holy Ghost, in the Old Testament, setteth out Conscience by another Name; it is called

called the Spirit of a Man, Prov. 20. 27. *The Spirit of a Man, is the Candle of the Lord, searching his inward parts*: The Spirit there is Conscience, Eccl. 8. 8. *There is no Man that hath power over the Spirit, to retain the Spirit.* The meaning of the place is, there is none hath power over the Conscience, to constrain or force that; there is none hath Right to do it, and none hath Ability to do it. *My Spirit made diligent search, saith the Psalmist*; he meaneth his Conscience, his Conscience made diligent search. In the New Testament also, you have that word Spirit used for Conscience, as Rom. 8. 16. *The Spirit himself beareth witness to, or with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God, i. e. witnesseth it unto our Consciences.* But the most usual Name in the Old Testament for the Conscience, is the Heart: From thence the Apostle takes it, and here he meaneth nothing else but Conscience, by our Hearts, either condemning, or not condemning us.

If it be objected, *How can what the Apostle saith be true? Is it not possible, that a Man's Heart may sometimes condemn him, when God doth not? Or is it not true, that sometimes a Man's Heart condemneth him not, and yet God doth?* I answer:

The Apostle speaketh here unto Believers; and therefore he speaketh concerning a Conscience enlightened and informed by the Word, and acting according to it: And so it is a Truth which never faileth, that if such a Conscience do condemn for any particular Sin, or bad Frame, God is greater, and knoweth all things, and condemneth the Man for that Sin much more. And if such a Conscience condemn not,

then that Soul hath Confidence towards God. If a Conscience enlightened, informed, and acted according to the Word of God, doth not condemn, but doth judge and pass Sentence, that a Man is of the Truth, if it be perswaded well of a Man's Condition as the Apostle speaketh here; and of a Man's Frame, then that Man hath confidence towards God. But I will stay no longer in opening the Words. The Doctrine I would present you with from them, is plainly this:

Doct. A Man's Discomfort, or Comfort, touching his Spiritua^l State before God, dependeth upon the Actings and Reflections of his own Conscience. Confidence towards God, is as a Mans own Conscience knoweth and saith within him, that he is of the Truth or not, 2 Cor. 1. 12. *Our rejoycing is this, even the Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World.* The Apostle plainly asserteth, that this was his Rejoycing and Comfort, his Confidence did arise from hence the Testimony of his Conscience touching the Grace of God in him.

There are two Parts of this Doctrine.

1. *That a Man's Discomfort touching his Spiritua^l State before God, dependeth upon the Actings of his Conscience.*
2. *That his Comfort, Assurance, and Confidence, dependeth likewise upon the Actings and Reflections of his own Conscience.*

Give

Give me leave to speak a little of the former, my Text leadeth me to it; and besides, it serveth to illustrate and set off the latter, namely, the Influence that Conscience hath towards a Believer's Confidence. I will only propose, and briefly answer that Question, *How Conscience worketh towards a Man's Discomfort before God, touching his Spiritual Estate?* And there is a fourfold Act of Conscience filling his Soul with Discomfort and Trouble.

1. Conscience looketh into, and readeth the Word of God, the Law of God, which is the Rule of Judgment. That by which a Man ought to judge of himself, and that according to which the Eternal Judgment of God is to be expected is the Word; and Conscience looketh into, and readeth that Rule, the Rule which requireth Duty, which bindeth Duty on a Man under the severe Sanction and Penalty of being liable unto Eternal Death; Conscience taketh Notice of it, and knoweth the Judgment of God, Rom. 1. 32. *That they which do such things are worthy of Death.*

2. Another Act of Conscience tending to Disquiet and Discomfort, is, *Bearing witness concerning a Man's swerving from that Rule which Conscience hath read and taken notice of.* Conscience bringeth a Man's Way, or Frame, and the Rule together, and comparcth them; discerneth a disagreement between them, it sayeth within a Man, thou hast broken this Rule, thou fallest short of what it doth require in this, and this, thou jarrest with it, and swerwest from it. Herein Conscience acteth the part of a Witness: As Conscience doth concerning a Man's Sincerity and Truth, *My Conscience bear-*

eth me Witness in the Holy Ghost, Rom. 9. 1. so
 Conscience beareth Witness concerning a Man's
 Sin and Guilt: This is that which was said of
David, when he had numbered the People, *2 Sam.*
24. 10. His Heart smote him, his Conscience
 told him, that what he had done was evil in
 the sight of God.

3. Conscience resteth not here, but *passeth*
Sentence, and pronounceth Judgment against a
Man, for his breaking that Rule. Conscience
 therefore acteth the part of a Judge, as well as
 of a Witness; it saith within a Man's Bosome,
 Thou art worthy of Death, because of this and
 this swerving from the Rule which God hath gi-
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 ver to Eternal Death, according to the righte-
 ous Judgment of God. This is that which is
 called *a Spirit of Bondage and Fear.* Rom. 8. 15.
 The Holy Ghost causeth the Conscience of an
 Elect Vessel, while out of Christ, to pronounce
 that Sentence and Judgment, that he is in his
 present State, according to the revealed Will
 and Word of God, bound over unto Eternal
 Death; this is the Spirit of Bondage. And
 herein Conscience doth not only pass a vanish-
 ing thought; that is, a Sentence which he
 heareth no more, listeth no more after: But
 when Conscience is ordained of God to fill a
 Man's Heart with Discomfort, it registreth and
 recordeth that Sentence upon the Heart, it
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 maketh it dwell upon his Thoughts, that it is
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not shake off; the Sentence of Condemnation is engraven in bright and flaming Characters before his Eyes continually. And thence some apprehend such an Office of Conscience, as to be a Register, or Remembrancer: And indeed it is so.

4. *Conscience executeth the Sentence which it self hath pronounced.* Not that it is the principal Efficient, but it is the Instrument in God's Hand, to inflict and execute the Sentence which it hath denounced in God's Name. Conscience doth not only accuse and condemn, but it doth likewise torment, as the Expression is, *Mat. 18. 34. Deliver him to the Tormentors*: Which may well be understood of giving up unto the furious Reflections and Lashings of Conscience. Conscience is what Christ meaneth by the *Worm which never dieth*, *Mar. 9. 44.* Conscience in those who are in Hell, is everlastingly tormenting them, tis stabbing their Hearts, letting out the Blood of their Souls, and that continually: A great part of the Punishment and Torment in Hell, lieth in this: Indeed, God by his Omnipotent Arm, poureth his Wrath into the Soul: But besides that, Conscience it self is still gnawing and tormenting those forlorn accursed Creatures. But I have mentioned these things briefly, to make way for what follows, and that is,

How doth Conscience work unto a Christian's Comfort? How doth it work to breed Confidence in the Heart towards God? How doth Conscience act towards Assurance?

That it doth so, is plain: Our rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, *2 Cor. 1. 12. Let every Man prove his own work, and then shall*

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shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another, Gal. 6. 4. There are four Actions of Conscience, which do concur and contribute towards this Assurance and Confidence, which the Text speaketh of.

1. Conscience looketh into, and readeth the Word, the Word of Promise, the Word of Comfort. I say the Word of Comfort; for so the Apostle telleth us the Scripture is, Rom. 15. 4. That we through Patience, and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. Now Conscience doth read and look into these Words of Comfort, these comfortable Passages in Scripture, these Passages which tend to Assurance, and speak Peace: Conscience is acquainted with them, it is so acquainted with them, as that it doth yield an Assent unto them, subscribeth unto them, setteth its own Amen and Seal, unto those good and comfortable Words. Conscience discerneth the Mind and Meaning of God in his Word, it apprehendeth truly and certainly, what is the meaning of God in those comfortable Words: And the Certainty of the Judgment of Conscience, in its discerning the Meaning of God in Words of Comfort, is like the Certainty of the Judgment of Conscience in its discerning the Meaning of God, in Prohibitions and Threatnings. Conscience also discerneth not only the meaning, but the Firmness and sure Stability of the Word of Comfort: That there is an inviolable Connection between the Good promised, and the Subject to which the Promise is made; Conscience readeth the Words of Comfort in the Promise, as established for ever in Heaven, it readeth the Covenant of Grace, as an everlasting Covenant, which

which is well ordered in all things, and sure. So David looked upon it when he was dying, 2 Sam. 23. 5. And so doth the Believer look upon it, so doth he apprehend, and take it in, when his Heart groweth up to Assurance and Confidence towards God.

Yea, the Believer's Conscience readeth not only the Certainty and Firmness of the Word of Comfort, but readeth it with an Application to it self. It readeth the Extent and Comprehensiveness of it, so as to see it self concerned and spoken to in it. It is a Word of Comfort, *He that believeth shall be saved*: The Conscience which is working towards Assurance, taketh up this, or the like Promise, and saith, *This belongeth to me*; I am concerned, I am spoken to in it, and it shall be verified unto me, made good and performed unto me, as well as to any other; if I believe I shall be saved: For this is the true intendment and meaning of the Promise: *The Righteousness of God is through Faith unto all, and upon all them that believe, without difference*, Rom. 3. 22. There is no exception, be the Sinner greater or less, be his Case what it will; if a Man come within the Promise, the Promise shall be made good unto him, the Word of Comfort speaketh to, and concerneth him, as well as any under Heaven. In all Assurance there is Application; yea, there is indeed, in all Faith an Application, a special Application to a Man's self. That then is the first Act of Conscience towards Assurance and Comfort, it doth thus look into, apprehend, and apply the Word of Comfort.

2. Conscience putteth forth another Act, it discerneth in a Man's self that Work of saving Heart-

Heart-changing Grace, to which a Promise is made, by which the Person is described to whom the Promise doth belong. Conscience seeth, and faith there is Grace in this Heart; yea, it fixeth upon some particular Grace or other, ordinarily; as that there is *Repentance* and *Brokenness* of Heart, that there is *Faith* of the *Operation* of God, or there is *Love*, or some other Grace, some other Heart-changing Grace: Conscience (I say) discerneth this Work. Sometimes it discerneth it, by reviewing former Transactions which have passed between the Soul and God. So Paul, 2 Tim. 1. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.* He doth not there speak of his present believing, relying, depending upon, or committing his Soul to Christ; but he reflecteth upon what had past, and been transacted between God and him some time before. Conscience discerneth Grace sometimes by feeling the present Pulse of the Soul, how the Heart beateth, what it's ordinary Frame is. David often speaketh of this in himself, how he loved the Law, and rejoiced in the Testimonies of God, and the like. The search and discovery which Conscience maketh, is not only that there are such and such Actions as look like Grace; but it searcheth into the very Inwards of them, it rippeth them up, and Anatomizeth them unto the very Bone: The Apostle did not only discern that there was *Simplicity and Sincerity* in his Conversation among the *Corinthians*, 2 Cor. 1. 12. but that this was in *Godly Sincerity*, and that this was by the *Grace* of God; he was acted in that Walk of his by a Principle of Grace, an High and Heaven-born Prin-

Principle. The Apostle therefore, to help the *Corinthians* in their Comfort, 2 *Epist.* 7 helpeth them how to discern, that *they sorrowed after a godly manner*, that their Repentance was true, and saving Repentance, they sorrowed after a Godly sort. So Conscience, being enlightned by the Spirit and the Word, discerneth that there are *such and such* Workings in the Heart, and that these are the Workings of true Grace. And this sight which Conscience hath, and this Witness which it beareth unto the Work of saving Heart-changing Grace, it is with very much Assurance in it self: When Conscience cometh to perswade the Heart before God, to make it full of Confidence towards him, it doth not say with Trembling and Fear, with Staggering, and Doubting, *I hope* there may be some Grace in this Heart of mine; but it cometh to be under the like certain Conviction of it, as it was concerning its own Corruption and Depravedness, in the Days of its first Conviction: The Soul then *saw and felt*, and it was put beyond Question, that there were such Motions of Sin within; so in like manner it *seeth, it feeleth*, it is put beyond Question, that there are such Motions, such Workings of Grace in it.

3. In order to Assurance and Comfort, Conscience passeth Sentence, and pronounceth Judgment concerning a Man's Spiritual State. This is done in the Conclusion of the Practical Syllogism, wherein Assurance is made up: *He that believeth shall be saved: But I believe*, Conscience doth not only bear Witness to that; but Conscience also inferreth, and concludeth, *there-*

therefore I shall be saved. And in this Sentence and Judgment of Conscience, Assurance doth most properly and principally lie: Without it there is not Assurance, there may be some Workings tending towards it, but until the Conscience cometh to make this Conclusion, to pass this Judgment, it is not Assurance. And this Judgment is passed under the Light and Conduct of the Spirit of Consolation: Yea, it is so past oftentimes, as to remain upon a lasting Record in the Conscience; Conscience remembereth what it hath seen, what it hath concluded, what Issue the Matter hath been brought unto in those solemn Discussions and Debates that have been in a Man's Bosome about his State: All Objections have been answered, all Doubts cleared, it hath been made evident with an over-powering Satisfaction, and the Soul hath been able to say, *I am in a happy State*: This is registred by Conscience in the Memory, to be had in everlasting Remembrance, and to be repaired unto in time of Temptation and deep distress.

Conscience putteth forth a farther Act, when it comforteth and raiseth up Confidence in the Heart towards God; It doth impress upon the inmost and deepest Affections, a taste and sense of the Sweetness of those things which it speaketh in a Man's Bosome. That Assurance which begetteth Confidence, as it is not dark or wavering, so neither is it a dead and dry Knowledge: A private Person may tell a guilty Criminal, that he is liable to Death; but that striketh not to his Heart: But when the Judge shall pronounce Sentence upon him, that wound-

woundeth his Heart. So it is in this Case, Conscience speaketh like a Judge, like God's Deputy and Vicegerent, it speaketh in God's Name, it speaketh in the Majesty of God, and hence there is set in upon the Heart and Affections some taste, relish, and feeling of the sweetness of those things which Conscience doth witness and testifie. Hence it cometh to pass, that by Assurance, the whole Heart, in all its Walk and Way of Application to God, is, as I may say, new moulded, it goeth to God with Liberty and Confidence, as to a Father, with Child-like Affections and Perswasions of his Love, ruling and reigning in it: It is so when the Soul hath Assurance; it is in part, and in some Measure so, where there is Grace, though no Assurance: But it is much more so, where Assurance is grown up to any Measure of Perfection. When the Heart is thus, and when it has Confidence towards God, the frame and way of its Application to God, in walking before him, is new moulded.

I should have come in the next place, to have shewed you, Whence it is, that Comfort and Confidence in the Heart of a Believer doth depend so upon the Workings of his own Conscience. There are several things concur thereto: The Greatness of the Things which Conscience speaketh. The Manner wherein Conscience doth speak. The Spirituality of a Believer's Heart, who hath Assurance, maketh it apt to take an Impression, and have a very deep sense and relish of these things. And the Holy Ghost himself doth ordinarily set in with Conscience in this Work, taketh

taketh the Heart into his own Hand, he maketh use of these Workings of Conscience, on purpose to raise that Confidence and fill the Soul with those sweet Affections which do ordinarily accompany Assurance : The Holy Ghost poureth in by his own Omnipotent Arm (by Conscience and the working thereof) the Oil of Joy and Gladness. But *that*, and the *Application* of the Doctrine will follow ; if God give Life and Health.

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